

NEWS

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Photo Cutline: Bok Choy can be harvested at any stage of growth, freeing up valuable garden space for annual or perennial ornamentals.

Photo Credit: USDA-ARS

Sneak a crop of Bok Choy into the ornamental garden

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Gardeners looking to add some new variety to the spring garden should consider Bok Choy. A member of the Chinese Cabbage class of plants, Bok Choy is an open headed leafy vegetable with long white stems and round green leaves. Gardeners who have grown Bok Choy or other Chinese Cabbages in the spring before may have noticed the plants' tendency to bolt as the days get longer. Because Bok Choy can be harvested anytime, gardeners can ensure that the plants get harvested before they're ready to flower.

Bok Choy should be planted in late March or early April in the Kansas City region. That's a great reason to consider planting it in a bed that is usually reserved for ornamental plantings. Existing beds that have herbaceous perennials in them or that usually get planted with annual flowers in May can often be a great place for a crop of compact cool season vegetables. The timing of harvest for these plants means that they will be removed in time to free up space for the ornamentals in the garden. Just make sure that the site will have at least 6 hours of full sun.

Seeds should be sown directly in the ground at a depth of about ¼ inch and about 6 inches apart. If you plan to grow a lot of Bok Choy, consider staggering the planting so that you can harvest the immature heads on a few occasions instead of all at once. Many varieties of Bok Choy, often called Baby Bok Choy, can be harvested as few as 30 days after planting. Once



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harvested and washed, add them to your favorite stir fry or salad. Bok Choy can either be served whole (when the plants are about 4-6 inches tall) or chopped, and fresh or cooked.

For more information on Bok Choy or other ethnic vegetable varieties, contact your local University of Missouri Extension office, or contact Marlin Bates at (816) 270-2141 or batesma@missouri.edu.