

cauliflower.

Sow: Summer varieties: under cover in January, winter varieties: outdoors in April in a nursery bed or pots.

Soil: Very hungry crop. Needs a great deal of well-rotted manure dug in the previous autumn. Grow a nitrogen-fixing green manure three or four weeks before planting and dig in.

Sun: Full sun. Avoid frost pockets.

Grow: Plant out when 5in high, 25in apart. Much well and feed with comfrey tea every three weeks. When head begins to form, protect from strong sunlight or frosts by folding the leaves over the top.

Harvest: Once heads are sufficiently large. Do not leave for too long – if the florets begin to separate or turn brown, you have missed the boat.

Problems: Protect from cabbage root fly using a collar around the base of the plant. Net the plant to prevent cabbage white caterpillars from stripping it entirely bare: pick off the eggs from the underside and base of the leaves. Clubroot is a soil-borne fungal disease which can hang about for twenty years. Rotate properly, and never compost diseased plants. Grow resistant cultivars.

For more advice on growing and cooking cauliflowers, visit the Stylish Gardening Blog: fennelandfern.co.uk