Cabbage: Chinese & Pac Choi

Nutritional Value:
This plant is very similar to cabbage in its offerings of vitamin C and several phytonutrients.

Challenges / Advantages:
Chinese cabbage can be tricky to grow, but has best success when the growth cycle is not interrupted by lack of water or temperature spikes, which will cause it to bolt early. The Pac Choi varieties mentioned below are easier to grow.

Sowing:
You will have the best success by direct seeding Chinese cabbage, because it has a hard time being transplanted without bolting. Sow seeds in mid summer for a fall crop. Sow seeds ½” deep, at 5” centers initially, or broadcast and thin later. As they get established thin them to 10” centers by pulling the smaller, weaker ones until you get that spacing.

Soil prep:
Optimal soil pH is 6.0-7.0. Chinese cabbage prefers well-drained, cool soil that’s rich in nitrogen. About 2” of good organic compost worked into the top 4-6” of soil is best.

Growing Conditions:
Chinese cabbage requires full sun, protected from wind. Try not to plant in a bed where other brassicas were grown in previous season.

Planting tips:
Chinese cabbage does better as a fall crop than a summer one. Accomplish this by planting in mid summer at least 2 to 3 months before first fall frost. If you have a shorter growing season, back time it to plan the planting date. The Pac Choi varieties are more tolerant of warmer temperatures than the Chinese cabbage.

Watering:
Much like cabbage, this plant will need consistent moisture in the soil to keep it on track. If it gets dry, the chances that it will bolt early rise dramatically. This is especially true in hotter climates.

Harvest:
Harvest heads as they become denser packed. You can harvest them younger for more tender leaves. They can become quite large if left in ground to full maturity. If temperature is cooler they can last longer at this stage than in hotter temperatures.
where they will start to falter. You can also harvest every other head in the bed to allow the remaining to grow larger.

**Notes:**
Chinese cabbage is actually more closely related to the turnip than to cabbage. It is an important staple in China and other countries, and has been grown for over 1500 years in eastern Asia. It is fermented for storage in many cultures. Try making Kimchi with it for a real taste sensation. There is an acquired taste for Chinese cabbage. It has a rougher texture than most greens, which makes it perfect for Kimchi. There are several close relatives like Pac Choi that have different flavors and textures. All of them are great for stir-fries and freeze well for long term storage.

**Storage:**
Chinese cabbage can keep for two weeks or more if placed in plastic bag in refrigerator. They can also store well for months in a root cellar that is cold enough. 38 degrees at 90% humidity is optimal. For freezing, chop them up, blanch in boiling water for 30 seconds, cool, and freeze in zip lock bags.

(Pac Choi) Above.