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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Raised in a Cabbage Patch

By Sara Sly, WSU Ferry County Extension Master Gardener

It does not take much this time of year to get my mouth watering. Just thinking about cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts and cauliflower make me hungry. These plants are all in the family brassica and have similar needs to grow well in a home garden. The brassica family needs soil rich in compost, moderate to high levels of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous in addition to steady watering.

In the fall, after the first hard freeze, add a layer of leaves to the bed where you will raise your plants next year then cover with a layer of straw for insulation once the days stay below freezing. Allowing the ground to freeze will compact the soil as well as stop the activity of worms and bacteria that help break down the leaves and keep the soil loose for planting next spring. Another option is a cover crop of nitrogen fixing alfalfa, peas or beans that can be chopped into the soil next spring.

I have tried to raise all of these plants several times but found that cabbage moths, looper worms or aphids have beaten me to the plants before I can harvest. This year I was able to raise brussels sprouts to maturity without bugs thanks to an insect netting called Agribon. The cabbage and broccoli I raised in a separate bed and tried to protect by hand picking bugs and using sprays of water turned out to be bug food again.

Agribon is one of several insect barriers that can be purchased from Jonny's seeds, Amazon or other stores that carry seed and garden supplies. The barrier is a netting that has holes small enough keep out insects such as those that are attracted to potatoes, greens, cabbages and radishes. The netting allows rain and up to 90% of light to pass through to the plants. According to the directions, the bottom edges will need to be held down with boards or staples to make sure insects don't crawl inside, but I found just overlapping the sides of my raised bed by six inches worked fine. Happy gardening!



Brussels sprouts covered



Brussels sprouts plant



Brussels sprouts beauty and goodness!

Master Gardeners is a WSU Extension program, which is available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.