

Workshop Title:

Basis Biennials – Onion and Kale

Speakers:

Patrice Fortier, Frank Cochrane

Executive Summary:

This presentation dealt with the specifics of growing onion and kale. Special detail was given relating to seeding and seed saving. The presentation was done bilingually with kale in English and onions in French.

Main Notes:

Oignons

Le cycle :

- Alternative de 3 ans (pour éviter de commencer les semis en serre en mars) :
 - 1re année - semer au mois d'août et hiverner sur place.
 - 2re année – Patrice utilise seulement une fertilisation résiduelle (après les courges par exemple).
 - 3e année – nécessaire de tuteurer.

Autres considérations :

- Pollinisation. La pollinisation est faite par les insectes, surtout les mouches.
- Isolement. Attention aux oignons vivaces (« top-setting onions » ou échalotes de Sainte-Anne) qui peuvent se croiser avec la culture de semence.
- Rendement. Sur 100 pieds x 4' de large on peut s'attendre à récolter +/- 800 grammes de semences.
- Récolte. Récolter la tête lorsqu'environ 1/3 des capsules est ouvertes.

- Post-récolte. Il est nécessaire de finir de sécher les têtes dans un endroit chaud et sec. Patrice nettoie les semences d'abord à l'aide d'un tamis puis par immersion (submerger les semences, jeter celles qui flottent et faire sécher le reste).

Q&A/ Questions du publique

À quelle température sécher les têtes d'oignons?

Patrice dit qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de chauffer, tant que l'air circule. On peut utiliser un déshydrater (maximum 35 Celsius).

À quel intervalle planter les oignons en 2e année?

Patrice les plantes à 1'X1' d'intervalle en quinconce.

Do all onions overwinter?

Patrice : No. Only hardy varieties, those with long life cycles.

Est-ce qu'un oignons patate peut être reproduit par les semences (reproduction sexuée)?

Oui, c'est possible.

Kale

Life cycle

- Getting started

Start indoors. Sifts through seeds before planting. Remove any weak or off-coloured seeds.

Start with a very high plant density. Rogue repeatedly during the 1st and the 2nd years (every 3-4 weeks) – final spacing should be around 24” off-centre.

Frank does multiple plantings all the way from March (in the greenhouse) to August plantings. He got excellent yields this year from a June 2015 seeding (harvested in 2016).

- Overwintering

Frank selects 200 or so plants and mounts a high tunnel over the bed to overwinter in. Frank prefers to leave the plants in place rather than digging them up. Using the tunnel helps prevent rot (and winterkill). Kale needs a 10-12 week below 10 degrees Celsius for proper vernalization.

- Harvest and post-harvest

Seed harvest is critical: too early and seeds are undeveloped, too late and the seed has shattered.

Frank goes about it bit by bit, combing the plant with his hand over a bucket to gather the dry seed.

To clean the seed, Frank uses a vacuum seed cleaner. Wind tunnel type cleaners work wonderfully

Other considerations

- Predators. Flea beetles and slugs can set back the crop. Frank uses row cover – this has been effective in minimizing damage.
- Seed viability: Kale seed has good viability (easily up to 6 years).
- Population. Minimum 80 plants to maintain genetics. Frank aims for 200 plants.
- Isolation. Kohlrabi, mustards, cabbages, brussel sprouts, etc. can cross with kale. An isolation of 800ft minimum is recommended for home use, at least double that distance for seed grown for sale. Frank also uses cages.
- The kale plant can survive the seed harvest during the 2nd year and produce seed again in year 3.

Q&A

A participant reminds us that there are two species of kale, one of which can cross with canola: Brassica Napa and Brassica Oleracea. Someone else adds that they can therefore be grown side by side.