

## Dwarf Essex Rape Seed

Dwarf Essex Rape produces an excellent economical fall and winter food plot. Planted at 5-15 lbs. per acre Rape is great for plowed ground forage for wildlife or livestock. Rape can also be overseeded in existing spring and summer food plots as they begin to decline in the early fall. After overseeding a close mowing and fertilizer application is all that is needed to give the rape plants what they need to thrive. Rape can be harvested or grazed every 30 days following a 75 day establishment period. Forage produced can contain 18-20% crude protein. Good cold tolerance makes harvesting or grazing late into the fall and winter an option.

Rape, also called colza, colsa, colerape, tori, and chou oleifere, is a cool-season annual plant similar to turnip and rutabaga. Rape originated in northern Europe and was cultivated in the Mediterranean area. It is seldom found in Florida gardens and presently is of no commercial importance in the state. When grown, it has been observed to produce satisfactorily.

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### DESCRIPTION

The upright, many branched rape plants have rutabaga-like leaves that are 4-12 inches long, slick, and generally lobed. Unlike rutabagas, however, they have no swollen root, only a thin taproot. Rape is of two general kinds: the annual grown for seeds and the biennial grown for forage. The latter is the 'Dwarf Essex' variety.

### CULTURE

Those wishing to try growing the rape plant should sow seeds in September through November in Florida; it will tolerate the cold season here. Culture and problems are similar to those for turnips, rutabaga, or kale. Actually, the rape plant looks very much like Siberian kale.

### USE

The young leaves may be removed and cooked as a potherb much as kale or collards. Composition of the young leaves is 83.3% water, 2.9% protein, 1.7% fat, 11.2% carbohydrates, and 1.8% fiber.

Although rape is outlined here due to its usefulness as a vegetable, it has been grown primarily for green livestock fodder, its seed oil (called colza oil), and birdseed. At one time the oil was used in lamps and for lubrication. Prior to World War II large quantities of rapeseed and oil were imported from Japan.