It is important to distinguish between the various spring vegetable seedlings for a number of reasons. If you are working in a garden center customers will have questions as to type, tags may become lost or misplaced, or plants may be returned because wrong type purchased. The photos below concentrate on Brassicaceae, Curcubitaceae, and Solanaceae crops.

**Brassicaceae**

Leaf form is usually thick, somewhat leathery, pale, yellow-green color, smooth. They are usually alternate, petiolate, oblong, and simple; but some are deeply pinnatified (feathered). However, in the seedling stage leaf differences between the species-varieties can be difficult to detect.

![Image of Brassicaceae seedlings](image-url)

**Fig. 1.** The main difference between the Brassicaceae is leaf type. Note that Brussels sprouts has a pronounced oval or oblong shape, smooth edge, lobed at base. Green cabbage has a more oval, smooth leaf, slightly serrated edge, not lobed at base. Savoy cabbage similar to green cabbage but leaf base tapered and leaf blade crinkled rather than smooth.
Fig. 2. Addition of cauliflower, broccoli, and kohlrabi. See figure #3 for close-up of cauliflower and broccoli. Note the distinctive pinnatifided leaf edge on kohlrabi.

Fig. 3. Cauliflower (A) has a more oblong, finely serrated leaf edge than broccoli (B) which has a more oval leaf and base definite lobed. Also, broccoli has a pair of stipules below main blade.
**Cucurbitaceae**

Fig. 4. Cucumber (A), muskmelon (B), and watermelon (C) can be separated by their distinct leaf shapes. Cucumber leaf is triangular-ovate with somewhat three-lobed, muskmelon is more orbicular to ovate to kidney shaped, youngest leaf strongly serrated, and watermelon oval but broader toward base and deeply notched.

**Solanaceae**

Fig. 5. Eggplant (A), pepper (B), and tomato (C) can be separated by their distinct leaf shapes. Eggplant is triangular, oblong, with a dull surface. Pepper is distinctly pointed, waxy or gloss surface, dark green, non-serrated edge. Tomato is a compound leaflet, lobed edges, older leaves contain glandular hairs.

**Test your knowledge**

Write in the common name of the crop plant (check your notes for Latin name of family – genus – species) for each photo below. Check your answers from the key on the last page. Not all plants described above.
Photo #11. _______________________________  

Photo #12. _______________________________
Answer Key

Photo #1. Brussels sprouts
Photo #2. Cabbage, green
Photo #3. Cabbage, savoy
Photo #4. Kohlrabi
Photo #5. Broccoli
Photo #6. Cauliflower
Photo #7. Watermelon
Photo #8. Cucumber
Photo #9. Muskmelon
Photo #10. Okra
Photo #11. Pepper
Photo #12. Ornamental pepper
Photo #13. Eggplant
Photo #14. Tomato