



These Greens Aren't Only Green!

Light green, bright green, red tips, red edges, purple-red with white veins, ruby red, wine-red, bronze-red, white with green edges! Frilly, rounded, spiky, serrated, wavy, crumpled, lacy deeply lobed, ruffled, puckered, smooth! Pungent, peppery, bitter, nutty, tangy, subtle, sharp, tender, mouth-watering! Beta-carotene, calcium, folic acid, iron, potassium, vitamin C!

If You Eat It, Why Not Grow It?

Even if you have a small garden space or only some patio pots you should still give growing greens a try – with minimal effort you can have the advantage of freshness, quality and nutritional value not found in bitter, wilted or overpriced grocery store produce. With your own backyard source, you can treat yourself to:

- Micro-greens = young seedlings with one or two sets of true leaves, usually about 10 to 14 days from planting;
- Baby-greens = tender, bite-sized leaves harvested at about 3 to 4 weeks, depending on variety; or wait for –
- Full-size leaves = continually harvesting only the taller outer leaves – known as “cut-and-come-again” will keep many of these plants growing and delivering into mid-summer.

Sowing and Growing Greens

- Annual greens discussed here are all relatively shallow-rooted plants, so site preparation is crucial for success. Greens grow best in a fertile, well-drained site. Add compost to the soil before planting to improve drainage and add nutrients.
- Most greens like to grow in full sun, but they will produce in areas with light shade. They perform well whether seeded or transplanted – try a combination for instant gratification as well as the satisfaction of nurturing your own seedlings.
- Container growing is also a great option – choose a pot at least 4”-6” deep and don’t allow the soil to dry out.
- Alternatively, sow micro-greens in shallow flats, snip-harvest at 10 to 14 days, and then re-sow.
- Greens may also be grown indoors – even during the winter – if plant lights are used to supplement available sunlight.
- Succession planting is also a great technique for lettuce, mesclun mixes, arugula, chervil, and mizuna: after your initial planting, sow more seeds every 2 to 3 weeks to keep those baby greens available.
- Remember that heat is a major factor in bitterness – when temperatures reach 80°- 90°, lettuce and many greens will bolt to flower and lose their sweetness. Site your summer sowings for shady spots to extend the harvest a little.
- A two-inch layer of organic mulch may also delay bolting by holding in moisture as well as keeping down the weeds.
- On the other hand, greens such as collards, kale, and mustard reach the sweetest flavor of the season with the first frost of fall. Go ahead and sow them in the spring but be sure to plant a fall garden if these are among your favorites.

Harvesting

Harvesting for micro-greens and baby greens is best done by pinching or snipping at the base of the stem. When growing to full-size, allow about 6”-8” between plants, or four per square foot. Harvest the entire head of miniature varieties at maturity as well as full-size varieties when high quantities are available. Cut-and-come-again varieties give you the option to harvest outside leaves as needed, allowing the inner leaves to keep growing for later harvests.

Three Dozen to Whet Your Appetite

Common Name	Botanical Name	Sow Date	Comments
Amaranth/Calaloo	<i>Amaranthus tricolor</i>	May 1	Spinach-like; sow thinly; cut outer leaves; pinch tops to force branching
Arugula - Salad	<i>Eruca sativa</i>	March 15	Piquant and nutty; best when young; edible flowers; self-seeds
Arugula - Wild	<i>Diplotaxis spp.</i>	March 15	Intense flavor; deeply lobed leaves; cut back mid-summer; self-seeds
Beet Greens	<i>Beta vulgaris</i>	March 15	Deep flavor, great color; thin seedlings for baby greens; cut-&-come-again
Celery Leaf	<i>Apium graveolens</i>	April 25	Same flavor as celery but easier to grow; use sparingly; cut-&-come-again
Chervil	<i>Anthriscus cerefolium</i>	March 1	Mild anise flavor, decorative; needs light to germinate; spring & fall only
Chicory/Frisée	<i>Cichorium endivia</i>	March 15	Tart flavor, frilly texture; good for mid-summer greens; cut-&-come-again
Cilantro	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	April 15	Pungent flavor; direct seed every 3 weeks or allow to flower and reseed
Claytonia	<i>Claytonia perfoliata</i>	March 1	Wild, fresh taste; very cold-hardy; suitable for multiple cuttings
Dill Leaf	<i>Anethum graveolens</i>	April 1	Licorice taste; direct seed every 3 weeks for extended harvests; self-seeds
Fennel Leaf	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	May 1	Anise flavor, fine texture; grow for bulb and/or leaf; butterfly plant
Garden Cress	<i>Lepidium sativum</i>	March 1	Peppery; easiest cress; harvest begins in 2 weeks; needs cool, moist rich soil
Lettuce - Bibb	<i>Lactuca sativa</i>	March 15	Soft, tender texture; matures early; best harvested for mini heads
Lettuce - Loose-Leaf	<i>Lactuca sativa</i>	March 15	Crisp, mild, ruffled; easiest to grow and harvest; cut-&-come-again
Lettuce - Romaine	<i>Lactuca sativa</i>	March 15	Sweet, crisp and juicy; upright and easy to harvest; cut-&-come-again
Lettuce - Summercrisp	<i>Lactuca sativa</i>	March 15	Crisp, sweet, juicy; easy and tolerates summer heat; cut-&-come-again
Lovage	<i>Levisticum officinale</i>	April 1	Mild flavor in leaf for salad, stems for soups; big, vigorous perennial
Mache	<i>Valerianella locusta</i>	March 1	Mild and nutty with soft texture; sow heavily; very cold-hardy; self-seeds
Magentaspeen	<i>Chenopodium gig</i>	March 1	Spinach taste, iridescent pink tips; sow thickly; harvest young tips & leaves
Malabar Spinach	<i>Basella rubra</i>	May 1	Glossy, thick, spinach-like; decorative, vigorous climber that loves the heat
Mesclun	<i>various</i>	March 15	Scatter seeds; harvest at 3"; sow every 2-3 weeks, providing summer shade
Minutina	<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	March 1	Crunchy and mild; edible flowers; very cold hardy; cut-&-come-again
Mizuna	<i>Brassica rapa var. jap</i>	March 15	Mildly pungent; good for baby greens; succession sow; cut-&-come-again
Mustard - Salad	<i>Brassica juncea</i>	March 1	All sorts of flavors/textures; succession sow; bolts early but edible flowers!
Orach/Mtn Spinach	<i>Atriplex hortensis</i>	April 1	Thick, ruffled, spinach-like leaves; high in Vitamin C; tall, ornamental plant
Parsley	<i>Petroselinum</i>	March 1	Fresh & crunchy; slow to germinate; biennial, self-seeds for continual crop
Purslane/Verdolaga	<i>Portulaca oleracea</i>	May 15	Tart, lemony and succulent; high in anti-oxidants; cut-&-come-again
Radicchio	<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	April 1	Zesty, bitter flavor, gorgeous color; harvest at softball size; spring & fall only
Salad Burnet	<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	May 1	Mild, cucumber-like taste; cut back mid-summer to refresh; perennial
Shiso	<i>Perilla frutescens</i>	May 1	Spicy, clove flavor and bright colors; large, bushy, decorative plant
Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	May 1	Tart, lemony flavor; cut-back mid-summer to refresh; large perennial
Spinach	<i>Spinacia oleracea</i>	March 1	Tasty but tricky; needs cool, rich soils and consistent moisture to germinate
Strawberry Spinach	<i>Chenopodium cap</i>	March 15	Tasty leaves & sweet berries; harvest young; spreads, sprawls, self-seeds!
Swiss Chard	<i>Beta vulgaris</i>	April 1	Flavorful, easy & beautiful; pre-soak seeds; cut-&-come-again all summer
Tatsoi/Asian Greens	<i>Brassica rapa var. nari</i>	May 1	Mild flavor & pretty rosette shape; bolts with cold; cut-&-come-again
Tetragonia/NZ Spinach	<i>Tetragonia tetra</i>	May 1	Summer spinach substitute; pre-soak seeds; large, spreading plant