



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?

Anyone with even a small place to spare in the garden should give growing greens a try. The home court advantage in freshness, quality and nutritional value – not to mention a quantum leap in mouth-watering flavor – far outweighs the minimal effort needed to start a few seed varieties or pop in some transplants. Just think: a gourmet salad or an instant stir-fry will always be waiting just outside your door.

bitterness be gone!

Mizuna, endive, mustard greens, radicchio, arugula...many people avoid these greens because the ones from the supermarket are often very bitter, wilted, or over-priced. With your own backyard source, you can treat yourself to:

- Micro-greens = young seedlings with one or two sets of true leaves, usually about 10-14 days from planting, a great salad, garnish, or sandwich-topper;
- Baby-greens = tender, bite-sized leaves harvested at about 3-4 weeks (depending on variety) with an intensity of flavor and texture; 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.

Succession planting is also a great technique for lettuce, mesclun mixes, arugula, chervil, and mizuna: after your initial planting, sow more seeds every 2-3 weeks to keep those baby greens available.

Heat is a major factor in bitterness – when temperatures reach 80° - 90°, lettuce and many greens lose their sweetness. On the other hand, greens such as collards, kale, and mustard reach the sweetest flavor of the season with the first frost of fall.

site preparation: sowing vs. planting

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. Micro-greens can also be grown in shallow flats and harvested at 10-21 days. With adequate light, greens may also be grown indoors even during the winter.

Your garden bed must be kept evenly moist for these quick-to-germinate, fast-growing sprouts. If you never let your seed bed dry out, you will be rewarded with sweet greens. The same advice applies to transplants and maturing greens. During our hot St. Louis summers, a 1” - 2” layer of organic mulch can keep your greens from premature bolting (going to seed) by holding in moisture as well as keeping down the weeds. Foliar feeding or a root drench with Nature’s Source will help combat heat stress, prevent early bolting, and add sweet flavor.

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 in the square-foot system. Cut-&-come-again varieties give you the option to harvest outside leaves as needed, allowing the inner leaves to keep growing. Most greens will bolt when temperatures get too high, or when they've reached the end of their growing cycle. Another reason to try succession planting!

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, very 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; begin harvest 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; 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	<i>Portulaca oleracea sat</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

