

SFA

Seeds for Africa

Rocket

Rocket (*Eruca sativa*/*Eruca vesicaria*) and wild rocket (*Sisymbrium officinale*) originally come from central and southern Europe where they are known as arugula or rucola. Rocket was an extremely popular ingredient in the Middle Ages but from the eighteenth century its use was restricted to the Mediterranean region, although this was only until the great herb revival that started about 10 years ago. These days the warm flavour – it is described as peppery, nutty, spicy or herby – is in demand everywhere, particularly because it lends an interesting undertone to ordinary salad leaves. Rocket also tastes good when served with a little olive oil, balsamic vinegar and Parmesan shavings. To tone down the flavour, try steaming rocket quickly and serving it in the same way as spinach.

GROWING TIPS:

Rocket prefers full sun or semi-shade and well-drained soil. Turn the soil over, work in compost, rake it even and water thoroughly the day before you sow. Sow the seeds 1-1,5cm deep in rows that are 30cm apart.

Rocket must receive sufficient water, preferably at the end of the day, otherwise it will go to seed too quickly. The soil should always be slightly moist.

When the rocket has reached a height of about 15cm (after approximately a month), thin it out and use the extra plants as baby salad leaves.

HARVESTING TIPS:

The frequency with which you nip out the flower and seed buds will determine the duration of your rocket harvest.

Only harvest the young leaves when you need them – pick only a few from each plant and remember that the older the leaves are, the stronger their flavour will be.

PESTS AND PLAGUES:

These plants are generally not popular amongst wildlife but snails and slugs can prove to be a problem.

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