

# Greens Growing Guide

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## ARUGULA (Roquette)

*Euruca sativa*

**How to Grow:** Arugula is a cool-weather crop that requires loose, rich, moist soil. Sow seeds in the spring as soon as the soil can be worked, with successive sowings 3-4 weeks apart. Sow 1/4 in. deep, 1 in. apart, in rows 8-12 in. apart, thinning to 4-6 in. apart.

## CHINESE CABBAGE

*Brassica rapa*

**How to Grow:** Similar to cabbage. If grown in spring, plant as early as possible as mature heads will rot in deep summer heat.

**Seed Savers:** Crosses with Chinese mustard, broccoli raab, turnips, and some rapeseed (canola). Isolate by a minimum of 600 ft. to 1/8 mile for home use, or by 1/4 to 1/2 mile for pure seed.

## COLLARDS

*Brassica oleracea var. acephala*

**How to Grow:** Kale and collards are members of the cabbage family, and have similar cultural requirements (See Cabbage section). They are both forms of non-heading cabbage and are among the earliest forms of cultivated cabbage. Both are exceptionally high in iron and in vitamins A and C. Collards are more heat-tolerant than cabbage and are usually winter-hardy from Virginia southward. Kale is best grown as a spring, fall, or winter vegetable. The taste of both kale and collards is sweetened and enhanced by frosts and cool temperatures. Kale and collards are best cooked, but young greens grown in cool weather are good in salads.

**Harvest:** Clip individual leaves before they are 12 in. long. Old leaves become tough and stringy.

**Diseases and Pests:** See cabbage section. Cabbage worms can be controlled with bT. Pick harlequin bugs off spring-sown crops or start new crops in late summer.

**Seed Savers:** Collards will cross with broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kohlrabi, and most kale. Isolate by 1/8 mile for home use. For pure seed of small plantings isolate by 1/4 to 1/2 mile.

## CRESS

**How to Grow:** A quick growing cool-weather vegetable, cress has many forms. Plant upland cress and curly cress in late summer or early fall in moist but well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter. Broadcast seed (or plant in rows 7 in. apart) and cover very lightly with soil or compost. Seed can take 2 weeks to emerge.

## KALE

*Brassica oleracea var. acephala* and *Brassica napus*

**How to Grow:** Kale is an easy-to-grow, nutritious brassica (cabbage-family) leafy green rich in vitamins A, C, and K, as well as calcium, iron and magnesium. This frost-hardy traditional crop can, with protection, provide winter greens even in the north. Flavor is best and disease problems are few when grown in cool weather. Plant in early spring for early greens, or in late summer for fall & winter harvest. Flavor of summer-sown kale improves after the first fall frost. Kale prefers full sun and fertile, moist, well-drained soil. Germination: 6-10 days. For spring sowings, start indoors 4 weeks before last frost or direct sow 1-2 weeks before last frost. For a fall/winter crop, sow 10 weeks before first hard frost. Sow 1/4" deep. Thin to 8-12" apart in rows 16-30" part. Use thick mulch & irrigate to maintain moisture during hot weather.

**Pests:** Kale has fewer pests than other brassicas. Use floating row cover to reduce insect damage to young plants. Practice a four-year rotation for all brassica crops to reduce disease and pests.

**Harvest:** Collect young leaves anytime. Clip oldest leaves when less than 12" long for tender leaves and best flavor.

**Seed Savers:** *Brassica napus* crosses with rutabaga and some rapeseed (canola). *Brassica oleracea* crosses with broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, and kohlrabi.

## MUSTARD GREENS

*Brassica juncea* and *Brassica rapa*

**How to Grow:** This nutritious cool weather crop shares cultural requirements with members of the cabbage family. (See Cabbage section.) Direct sow 1/4 in. deep in spring, summer, and early fall. Thin to 8-12 in. apart in rows 10-12 in. apart. Keep well watered.

**Seed Savers:** *Brassica rapa* crosses with Chinese cabbage, broccoli raab, turnips, and some rapeseed (canola). Isolate by a minimum of 600 ft. to 1/8 mile for home use. For pure seed isolate varieties by 1/4 to 1/2 mile.

## PARSLEY

*Petroselinum crispum*

**How to Grow:** Parsley seed germinates very slowly, requiring 3-4 weeks, and so is best started indoors. It can be sown directly outside in early spring before weeds are growing fast: sow seeds 1/4 in. deep, and thin to 6-12 in. Keep well watered. Soaking seed in water for 24 hours will speed germination. Mark location with radish seed. (Fast germination procedure: Plant seed in a small flat of soil or planting medium. Place flat in a zip-lock bag, and freeze for 12-24 hours. Remove from freezer and keep moist until seed begins to germinate.)

**Pests:** Voles can eat parsley roots. We often do a 2nd planting in late summer to replace any plants lost to voles.

**Seed Savers:** Isolate by a minimum of 1/4 mile for home use. For pure seed isolate by 1/2 to 1 mile.

## SPINACH

*Spinacea oleracea*

**How to Grow:** Spinach does well with a combination of cool weather, short days, high soil fertility, ample water, and neutral pH (6.5-7.5). Sprinkle some limestone in the row as you plant if you think the soil is too acidic. Sow seed 1/2 in. deep directly into the garden as soon as the ground can be worked, and thin to 4-6 in. apart in rows 8-10 in. apart. Succession plantings can be made every 2 weeks. Temperatures above 60 degrees F for the first 6 weeks of growth may increase the tendency to bolt. Mulch the soil to reduce bolting by keeping the roots cool. As spring heats up plants get smaller and less sweet and bolt faster.

**Fall Planting:** High summer temperatures can kill small seedlings, so wait until a month before first fall frost to sow. Fall plantings give a more sustained harvest than spring plantings. Spinach grown in frosty weather has the largest and sweetest leaves. Some varieties tolerate 0 degrees F and over-winter to produce excellent spring crops.

**Pests:** For fall crops, sow seed 2-3 times as thick to help spinach survive grasshoppers.

**Seed Savers:** Grow only one variety or isolate by 1/4 mile for home use. For pure seed isolate by 1/2 to 1 mile.

## SWISS CHARD

*Beta vulgaris var. cicla*

Leaf stems are edible as well as leaves. A few plants of Swiss chard will provide a large supply of greens throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Can withstand light frosts; mulching around plants may help plants overwinter in areas with mild winters. Planted from early to late spring, or again in the fall.

**How to Grow:** Sow seeds 1/2 to 3/4 in. deep and thin to 12-16 in. apart.

**Harvest:** Clip off leaves near the base of the plant.

**Cooking:** Excellent when stir-fried, or used in creamed soups or quiche. Freezes well.

**Greenhouse Notes:** Swiss chard is an ideal plant for solar greenhouses, where it may be grown as a perennial.

**Pests:** In the Southeast, blister beetles may attack chard in mid-summer. Pick off beetles (wear gloves!), or pull up plants and wait to replant for fall.

**Seed Savers:** Isolate varieties by a minimum of 1/4 mile for home use. For pure seed isolate by 1/2 to 1 mile. Will cross readily with beets.