

COUNTRY GARDENS

GROW AN
INDOOR
KITCHEN
GARDEN

CREATE A
VINTAGE DIY
SUCCULENT
PLANTER

SPEAK THE
LANGUAGE
OF LOVE
WITH
FLOWERS

GOURMET
LETTUCES
FROM SEED
TO SALAD


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BHGspecials™

GOOD-BYE
WINTER

**HELLO
SPRING!**



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BIG BEAUTIES

TENDER AND BUTTERY
OR CRISP AND CRUNCHY—
HOMEGROWN HEAD
LETTUCES ARE PLEASING
TO THE EYE AS WELL AS
THE PALATE.

BUTTERHEAD LETTUCE WITH FRESH RASPBERRY MERLOT DRESSING

This rich-tasting creamy dressing is especially luscious with the tender leaves of butterhead lettuce. The pastel dressing and raspberry-and-nut garnish make a beautiful presentation.

DRESSING:

- 1 large clove garlic, minced
 - 1 shallot, minced
 - 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
 - 1 Tbsp. honey
 - 2 Tbsp. good quality (not too bitter) raspberry vinegar
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Merlot wine
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. freshly ground pepper
 - 3 Tbsp. olive oil
 - 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil
 - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups fresh raspberries or frozen, defrosted, and drained
 - 3 Tbsp. sour cream
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- 1 large head butterhead lettuce
 - 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh chives
 - 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley

GARNISH:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh or defrosted whole raspberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup toasted pecan pieces

In a food processor or blender, make the dressing by combining the garlic, shallot, mustard, honey, vinegar, wine, salt, pepper, olive oil, vegetable oil, raspberries and sour cream. Mix until blended. Taste and add more honey if desired.

Slice the whole lettuce head into wedges and arrange on plates. Sprinkle chives and parsley over lettuce. Drizzle dressing over lettuce. Garnish with whole raspberries and pecans. (Alternatively, tear the lettuce into pieces, add herbs, and toss with dressing.)
Makes approximately 2 cups





ABOVE Renee Shepherd has made a career of searching out the best vegetable, herb, and flower seeds from all over the world. **TOP** Testing the seeds she finds in her Southern California garden is a must before she shares them with gardeners through her company, Renee's Garden.

The term “head lettuce” often brings to mind the pale, water-filled leaves of the salad-bar standby, iceberg lettuce.

Supermarket varieties of romaine have more color, but like other commercial vegetables grown for shipping long distances, they can be disappointingly tough and flavorless. Take it from someone who has spent a lifetime searching out the most delightful and delicious vegetable varieties in the world: Even if you only have space for a pretty pot or two, you could be enjoying truly luxurious lettuce.

There are dozens of delicious heirloom and modern heading varieties for your kitchen garden. From the tight, semi-solid base form of firm, crunchy romaines to the softly folded, meltingly tender, and buttery rosettes of succulent butterheads, big head lettuces shine in cool weather and offer so much from a small packet of seeds. Some are so beautiful in their forms and colors that they make glamorous additions to colorful flowerpots and beds, but their real pleasure is in the eating.



ROMAINE SALAD WITH CREAMY CAPER DRESSING

This appetizing salad is especially fast to assemble because the dressing is made right in the bowl and the salad added on top. Toss right at the table for a bit of dining drama.

DRESSING:

- 2 anchovies, drained and minced
- 1 shallot, minced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 Tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 3 Tbsp. chicken broth
- 1 Tbsp. mayonnaise
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1½ Tbsp. drained capers
- 2 Tbsp. chopped Italian parsley

- 1 large head romaine, torn into bite-size pieces
- ½ small red onion, very thinly sliced
- 2 medium tomatoes, quartered
- ½ cup julienne strips of uncooked celery root, raw fennel, or jicama
- ½ cup thinly sliced radishes
- ¼ cup thinly shaved slices of Parmesan or Asiago cheese
- ½ cup croutons

To make the dressing in the bottom of a salad bowl, mash the anchovies, shallot, and garlic together, then add the lemon juice, mustard, broth, mayonnaise, oil, capers, and parsley. Combine well.

Arrange the romaine, onions, tomatoes, celery root, and radishes on top of the dressing. Sprinkle the cheese and croutons over top. To serve, toss the salad at the table, combining the vegetables and greens with the savory dressing.

Serves 4–6



These recipes are excerpted with permission from *The Renee's Garden Cookbook: Delicious Recipes for Everyday Cooking with Growing Advice for Kitchen Gardeners* by Renee Shepherd and Fran Raboff. The book is available at reneesgarden.com.



QUEEN OF CRUNCH
CRISPHEAD



RED AND GREEN ROMAINE



RUBY GEM BABY ROMAINE



RHAPSODY BUTTERHEAD

LUSCIOUS LEAVES

Although garden lettuce is available in many varieties, it's all in the same species, *Lactuca sativa*. **CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** Queen of Crunch is a heat-tolerant, sturdy lettuce that matures into attractive heavy rosettes. Pick red and green romaines at baby sizes or let them grow into dense, heavy heads. Ruby Gem is a short romaine type with deep red leaves above a green heart. The long pointed leaves of Red Deer Tongue grow outward and upward to form loose heads. Merveille de Quatre Saisons is a centuries-old French heirloom bibb lettuce. Pick just the outer leaves of Flashy Trout Back as it grows, or cut as a head. Dutch Redina, Batavian Nevada, and French Cardinale have good heat tolerance. Rhapsody Butterhead has a satiny texture and rich buttery taste.



RED DEER TONGUE

BATAVIAN NEVADA, FRENCH
CARDINALE, DUTCH REDINA



FLASHY TROUT BACK



MERVEILLE DE
QUATRE SAISONS



“You’ll be pleased to know you can plant them again in late summer or early fall.”

— Renee Shepherd

Many types of head lettuce make the grade for home gardens, and among those types are several cultivars to choose from. All can be planted from seed in early spring, either started in small pots indoors or sown directly in the garden. They are so fancy and tasty that you’ll be pleased to know you can plant them again in late summer or early fall, when daytime temperatures are in the 60s or low 70s. These are the types I enjoy most:

ROMAINE: These heavy heads of tall, upright, broadly oblong leaves clustered around thick, juicy, full-flavored hearts taste sweet and crunchy with lots of substance. Romaine holds up well to heavy, creamy dressings. Commercial varieties available at supermarkets are bred for size and weight and can have tough, rather leathery leaves. When you grow your own at home from seed, you’ll select from crisp, tender, and heat-tolerant cultivars in green, red, or speckled varieties. Use romaines for whole-meal salads where you want leaves with juicy crunch and substance to pair with cubed or sliced cooked meats, cheeses, or nuts.

BATAVIAN: My favorite! A European type, especially popular in France, this luscious class of lettuces isn’t often seen here in the United States. Batavians are available from seed in both red and green leaf varieties. Mature heads are dense and heavy rosettes of substantial crispy leaves with an open, butterheadlike shape. Batavian lettuce is remarkably resistant to bolting in hot weather. Wonderful for salads and sandwiches, it can also be shredded for tacos, or try combining it with citrus fruits, strawberries, sweet onions, hard-boiled eggs, avocados, or cooked shrimp.

BUTTERHEAD: Various called butterhead, bibb, Boston, or limestone lettuce (names vary in different areas), these softly folded, smooth-leaved, light green rosettes are becoming increasingly popular. Some butterheads form loose, open rosettes, and others develop tighter, semi-solid heads with undulating leaves prized for their rich texture and flavor. Don’t overwhelm their delicacy with heavy commercial dressing; a simple homemade vinaigrette blended from olive oil and mild rice vinegar works best. Butterheads pair perfectly with soft cheeses and toasted nuts.



ABOVE Transplant lettuce seedlings after they show their colors, to create a lettuce bed with a fancy pattern. **BELOW** The deep red speckles of Flashy Trout Back appear as soon as the lettuce sprouts.



WARM SHRIMP SALAD WITH GINGER AND TARRAGON DRESSING

An unusual and extravagant-tasting first-course salad. Stir-fried shrimp contrasts with crispy greens and colorful peppers tossed with a tarragon- and ginger-infused dressing.

DRESSING:

- 2 cloves garlic
 - 2 shallots or 3 scallions, chopped
 - 2 Tbsp. fresh tarragon
 - 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh ginger
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
 - 3 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
 - 1 Tbsp. soy sauce
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil
 - 1 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. freshly ground pepper, or to taste
- 12 oz. medium raw shrimp, peeled and deveined

- 2 heads of lettuce, 1 green-leaf and red-leaf, torn into bite-size pieces
- 1 bunch of arugula

GARNISH:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ each, red and yellow bell peppers, sliced into thin strips

In a blender or food processor, make the dressing by combining the garlic, scallions, tarragon, ginger, lime juice, vinegar, soy sauce, olive oil, sesame oil, and pepper. Mix until well blended.

Marinate the shrimp in 3 Tbsp. of dressing for 30 minutes, reserving the remaining dressing. Drain shrimp and discard marinade.

In a skillet, heat 1 Tbsp. of the reserved dressing. Add the shrimp and stir-fry quickly 1 to 2 minutes or until the shrimp is pink throughout.

Arrange the lettuces and arugula in a large salad bowl and scatter the hot shrimp on top. Garnish with the bell pepper strips. Pour the remaining dressing over the salad. Toss well and serve. Serves 4-6





HAWAIIAN VACATION SUMMER SALAD WITH PEANUT SESAME DRESSING

A creamy and delicious dressing for crisp romaine lettuce, bright mango or papaya, and crunchy jicama.

DRESSING:

- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 1 quarter-size slice fresh ginger
- 2 Tbsp. rice vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. sour cream
- 2 tsp. honey
- ¼ tsp. Asian chili paste
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame oil
- ¼ cup peanut oil
- Salt

- 2 medium-size heads of romaine lettuce, washed and torn into bite-size pieces
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh basil
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh mint leaves
- 2 Tbsp chopped chives, regular or garlic
- ½ cup finely diced jicama
- 1 mango or papaya, peeled, cut into 1-inch cubes

GARNISH:

- 1 Tbsp toasted sesame seeds
- ½ cup coarsely chopped, toasted peanuts

Combine the garlic, ginger, vinegar, soy sauce, sour cream, honey, chili paste, and the sesame and peanut oils in a blender or food processor. Blend thoroughly. Add salt to taste.

Arrange the romaine, basil, mint, chives, jicama, and mango or papaya in a large salad bowl. Pour dressing over salad and toss lightly until coated. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and peanuts before serving.

Serves 4-6



SOW AND GROW HEAD LETTUCES

1 While head lettuce can be grown from seed sown directly into the garden or containers, best results come from growing seedlings in small pots outdoors for transplanting. After the danger of frost has passed, sow lettuce seeds ½ inch apart, cover lightly, and keep evenly moist. Germination takes 7-10 days and is best at cool temperatures of 60° to 70°F.

2 When seedlings are 2-3 inches tall, transplant individual seedlings 4-6 inches apart into the garden. When seedlings reach 4-5 inches tall, thin the planting, leaving young plants approximately 12 inches apart—lettuce needs space to form big, beautiful heads.

3 Use a soaker hose or drip irrigation on an inexpensive hose bib timer to make it easy and convenient if you need to water regularly. Consistent moisture helps keep leaves sweet-tasting.

4 If hot weather arrives early, or if you plant lettuce in conditions that are hotter than ideal, suspend shade cloth above the lettuce bed on hoops of half-inch black poly tubing. Harvest plants before the lettuce bolts (sends up flower stalks) and becomes bitter.