

Grow a Pot of Salad Greens

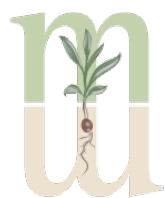
Start the garden season right now with a container of greens. These are nutritious, colorful, and fun to grow indoors or out. Plant some seeds now and in 30 days or more, you will be harvesting some homegrown greens to enjoy throughout the spring and early summer. Use them to create a salad, dress up a sandwich, or top a pizza.

Most leafy greens provide a variety of vitamins and minerals. Spinach, kale, romaine lettuce, watercress, and arugula are among the most nutrient-dense greens. They contain a combination of Vitamins A, C, K, several B vitamins, and potassium.

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Here's What You Need

- Seeds of lettuce, spinach, baby kale, baby chard or other leafy greens
 - Use a mixture of colorful greens to increase the beauty of your container garden
- A container with drainage holes
 - Add a little flare with a unique container, a recycled item or by adding a bit of paint to the pot
- A well-drained potting mix
- A warm, bright spot to sprout the seeds, as some greens need light to germinate
- A sunny window or artificial lights to provide needed light when growing your greens indoors or until it is safe to move the pot outside
- A sunny spot on your patio, deck or balcony when weather permits if moving your pot of greens outdoors
- Fertilizer



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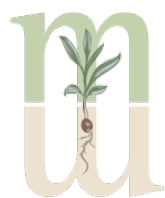
Getting Started

- Fill the container with potting mix, leaving about a half inch of space between the container lip and soil. This helps prevent water from overflowing the container.
- Add a slow-release fertilizer, if desired, or once the seedlings sprout, begin using a fast-release fertilizer according to label directions
- Set the container on a saucer to avoid damaging furniture or woodwork
- Check the seed packet for planting directions. It will tell you how deep and far apart to plant the seeds
- Sprinkle the seeds on the soil surface, gently stir or cover with potting mix at the depth, usually 1/8" to 1/4", as recommended on the seed packet
- Gently water and continue to water often enough to keep the soil surface slightly moist
- Move the container to a sunny window or under artificial lights as soon as the seeds sprout

Ongoing Care and Harvesting

- Water thoroughly when the top inch or two of soil is just starting to dry. Pour off excess water or set the pot on pebbles in the saucer. This elevates the pot above any excess water in the saucer, helping avoid root rot.
- Thin the plantings when your plants have one or two sets of true leaves. The true leaves look like those of the plant you are growing. Cut the extras off at the soil surface, leaving a couple of inches between each remaining plant.
- Use these greens to garnish a salad or eat them plain
- Harden off the plants growing indoors before moving them outside. Place them in a sunny location for an hour and back in the shade for the remainder of the day. Increase the amount of sunlight the plants receive every day for the next week or two. Protect the plants from frost by covering them or moving them indoors. Once they are hardened off, they can tolerate temperatures in the 20s.
- Check the soil moisture daily and more often when moved outdoors and growing in a small pot
- Start harvesting by snipping the outer leaves of lettuce when they are 3 to 4 inches tall. They will continue to produce more leaves for weeks of continuous harvest. You can harvest just the early maturing leaves of other greens to extend the harvest as well.
- Regular harvesting will keep your lettuce producing new leaves. Or, harvest all the leaves at once and create one big salad.
- When the weather turns hot, the plants tend to flower and taste bitter. Try planting more heat-tolerant varieties or switch to other tasty vegetables.
- Starting greens indoors allows you to jump-start the growing season. You will enjoy an earlier harvest and warm up your green thumb for the season ahead.

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