

# Veggies! Succession Planting & Tips for Getting a Lot Out of a Small Space

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## PREPARING YOUR GARDEN SOIL

Many edibles, including greens, carrots and radish, have very small seeds and do not compete well with weeds. They germinate and grow best in beds with finely prepared, weed-free soil. Follow these steps to get perfect salad growing soil:

1. Start by weeding your lettuce bed thoroughly three weeks before transplanting or direct sowing. Spread compost one inch thick over the soil and dig it in. As you work, remove any rocks, hard clods of soil, and crop debris. Rake the bed until the soil has a fine, crumbly, brown sugar-like texture. Then, water the bed in well.
2. Wait for the first flush of weeds to come up then cultivate lightly. A hula hoe (also called a stirrup hoe) is a good tool for removing small weeds because it cuts just under the soil line, killing the weeds without disturbing the soil.
3. Remove any remaining weeds and water the soil well.

## SOWING BABY GREENS

Baby greens are simply salad greens, including lettuce, arugula, mustards, chicories, and chard, that are harvested when their leaves are small and succulent. Plan on spacing rows of baby greens about 6 to 8 inches apart and sowing the seed in 6-inch wide bands. Lettuce needs light to germinate, so sprinkle the seeds on top of finely prepared, moist soil and cover them with an extremely light layer of screened compost or a little potting mix. Gently pat the seeds to ensure good soil-to-seed contact and then water them in with a sprinkle of water from a watering can. Keep the soil consistently moist. Harvest baby greens when they reach about four inches tall and have formed a thick strip of leaves. Use scissors to cut the row of greens down, leaving a one-inch stub behind. After harvesting, pour one cup of diluted fish emulsion on the row to encourage the greens to re-grow quickly. You can usually get three harvests from one planting. A 6-inch wide, 3-foot long row of baby greens produces enough salad for 2 people for one week (assuming a salad is consumed every day).

## GROWING HEADS OF LETTUCE AND LARGER GREENS FROM SEED

You can also grow heads of lettuce and larger greens like Swiss chard, mustards, and kale easily from seed. Prepare the soil as described above. Space the rows 10 to 12 inches apart if you plan to harvest mature plants. Sprinkle the seeds over finely prepared, moist soil, trying to space them about 2 inches apart, and cover them with an extremely light layer of screened compost or a little potting mix. Gently pat the seeds to ensure good soil-to-seed contact and then water them in with a sprinkle of water from a

watering can. Keep the soil consistently moist. Thin out the seedlings after they have developed three or four leaves, using the tender thinnings in salads.

Or, if you've sown baby greens, you can dig up a clump when the plants have three or four leaves, gently pull them apart, and then transplant the individual plants. When thinning or planting seedlings, leave 8 to 12 inches between chard, mustard, kale, and Batavian, romaine, and crisphead lettuces, 6 to 8 inches between butterhead lettuces, and 4 to 6 inches for full grown leaf lettuces and spinach. When harvesting, plan on one head of lettuce feeding two people for an entrée size salad or four people as a side salad; one mature spinach plant per person; 6 mature kale leaves per person; 4 mature Swiss chard and giant mustard leaves per person.

### STARTING WITH SEEDLINGS

Seedlings are more expensive than seeds, but they mature more quickly and are almost foolproof. Plan to plant seedlings in the late afternoon so they won't bake in the sun all day. To prevent transplant shock, make sure that the seedlings are fully hydrated prior to planting. Water them well 24 hours prior to planting and again 2 hours before planting. Transplant them into moist soil and space them based on the thinning recommendations above. Give the transplants a kick start after planting by watering them in with diluted fish emulsion. You can harvest individual leaves by pinching them off at the base of the plant. To harvest entire plants, slide a sharp knife just under the soil line and slice the plant away from its roots.

### SLUG CONTROL

Slugs are the archenemies of salad gardeners. Keep these slimy pests under control by sprinkling an organic iron phosphate slug bait, such as Sluggo or Escar-go, around your lettuce bed at planting time.

### SEASON LONG SALADS PLANTING PLAN

#### Mid-March through Mid-May

In mid-March, plant seedlings of romaine, butterhead, and leaf lettuce. Direct-seed baby lettuces, spinach, arugula, and mustards. Plan on planting a two-week supply of greens for your family every 14 days (see Sowing Baby Greens and Growing Head of Lettuce above for information on how to calculate). For the highest quality greens, place a row cover over the beds to protect them from late frost, pounding spring rains, and aphids. Once the weather daytime temps regularly hit 60 degrees F, take off the row cover and begin sowing every 7 to 10 days, and switch to heat-tolerant varieties, like 'Simpson Elite', 'Butter Crunch', 'Jericho', 'Flashy Trout's Back', and 'Nevada.' In March plant seedlings of chives, chervil, fennel, and parsley; sow a row of dill, begin sowing cilantro every two weeks.

### Late-May through mid-August

Hold off on planting spinach, arugula, and mustard (they just bolt in the heat) and continue sowing heat tolerant lettuces. Transplant and direct-sow lettuce to areas that get shade, such as underneath tomato plants or corn. Be sure to keep up on watering, and harvest lettuce at the baby stage before it has a chance to develop bitter-tasting latex. Make successive plantings every 7 to 10 days in summer. Plant seedlings of basil in late May and sow basil seed in early June, continue sowing cilantro every two weeks and sow another crop of dill.

### Late August through September

Sow crops of spinach, mache (corn salad), and arugula. Switch to cold-tolerant lettuces, including butterhead and romaine varieties, and begin sowing or planting seedlings once a week, because lettuce's growth slows down as days cool and shorten. Put in seedlings of cold crops. Stop planting in late September. Extend the season by installing row covers over lettuce when nighttime temperatures dip below 45°F to protect the plants from wind and the elements.

### Mix and Match Succession Planting

Planning a garden is the best way to maximize your space. Make a diagram for each of your planting beds or edible containers for each season. Drop in a mix of quick crops that will be in and out of the bed in a couple of months, medium season crops that will come out halfway through the season, and leave space for crops that will take many months to mature. Consider how you will use your trellis space (I often plant cucumbers or a smaller winter squash after my first crop of peas). Don't forget that winter crops need to be seeded in late July so they have time to size up before the days grow shorter.

### Quick Crops

Arugula, Asian greens, broccoli rabe, bush beans, chervil, cilantro, lettuce, mustard greens, radishes, spinach, turnips

### Mid Season Crops

Basil, beets, broccoli, carrots, dill, edamame, fennel, kale, leeks, onions, parsley, peas, potatoes, Swiss chard, cucumbers

### Long Season Crops

Cabbage, cauliflower, corn, eggplants, fave beans, garlic, melons, peppers, pole beans, shallots, tomatillos, tomatoes, summer and winter squash.

### Edible Extras to Try

- Arugula blossoms and pods
- Beet greens at both the baby and mature stages

- Brassica flower buds and flowers, including kale, mustard, collard, and turnip
- Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprout, and kohlrabi leaves (cooked)
- Cilantro seeds (which are the spice coriander) both at the green and mature stage
- Corn shoots
- Fava bean greens
- Garlic leaves, garlic scapes, immature “green” garlic, even the fresh roots (well washed!)
- Herb blossoms, including basil, oregano, rosemary, thyme, chives, fennel, dill and mint
- Pea shoots and blossoms
- Radish greens, blossoms and seedpods
- Thinnings (carrot, greens, beets, herbs)
- Summer and winter squash blossoms; winter squash plant tips
- Swiss chard stalks (finely minced and cooked or pickled)
- Turnip tops
- Winter squash seeds (not just pumpkins, but acorn, butternut, and kabocha squash, too)

### Small Local Seed Companies

Each of these companies is committed to growing organic seed, developing regionally adapted varieties, and buying seed from small local farms in the Pacific Northwest (or growing it themselves).

Siskiyou Seeds	Uprising Seeds	Wild Garden Seed
Williams, OR	Bellingham, WA	Philomath, Oregon
<a href="http://siskiyouseeds.com">siskiyouseeds.com</a>	<a href="http://uprisingorganics.com">uprisingorganics.com</a>	<a href="http://wildgardenseed.com">wildgardenseed.com</a>

### Some of My Favorite Varieties

‘Golden India’ snow pea, ‘Sugar Ann’ snap pea, ‘Wando’ shelling pea, ‘Erbette’ Swiss chard, ‘Nero di Toscano’ kale, ‘Rainbow Lacinato’ kale, ‘Purple Peacock’ broccoli, ‘Delfino’ cilantro, ‘Bouquet’ dill, ‘Berggarten’ sage, ‘Astro’ arugula, ‘Ruby Streak’s

mustard, 'Forellenschluss' lettuce, 'Australian Yellow Leaf' lettuce, 'Golden Alexandria' strawberry, 'Aquadulce' fava beans, 'Costata Romanesco' summer squash, 'Cheiftan Savoy' cabbage, 'Roxton' leek, 'Black' cherry tomato, 'Jaune Flamme' tomato, 'Striped Roman' paste tomato, 'Stupice' tomato

Order Willi's Book!

Grow Cook Eat: A Food-Lover's Guide to Vegetable Gardening is available at all major booksellers. If you would like a signed and inscribed copy, please email Willi at [willievans@mac.com](mailto:willievans@mac.com) and she will send you one!