

## Home/Garden

# Mixing up some greens

No matter how limited my space I would have to have a garden just so I could grow a salad. The stores provide more variety of greens than they used to, but nothing can compare with different lettuces and other greens, fresh from the garden garnished with pungent green herbs or maybe a handful of colorful violet or nasturtium blossoms.

My salads all begin with lettuce, almost anything but iceberg. I don't even try to grow crisphead lettuces like iceberg in my garden, partly because they require a long season, partly because they are less nutritious with much less vitamins A and C and iron and calcium than the leafy dark green varieties, and partly because I don't like the taste as much. But in matters of taste there is no dispute so if you like crispheads, you can grow them in a garden if you remember they like a richer soil with ample phosphorous (rock phosphate or bonemeal) than other varieties.

Butterhead lettuces are one of my favorites and I always plant Buttercrunch although I have also grown Bibb. Butterheads are sensitive to heat and can bolt. This isn't a great problem in my garden because even in summer nights tend to be cool, but I do plant lettuce in the shade of my pea and bean vines.

Romaine or cos lettuce grows in tall loose, cylindrical heads of deep green leaves. Parris Island is an old stand by; it's dependable and very tasty.

And then there are the looseleaf varieties. These come up the fastest and I watch my patch every day, I'm so eager for the first harvest and that first fresh, fresh salad. I can hardly imagine a salad garden without Black Seeded Simpson, but I also like Green Ice because the leaves are more substantial and bruise less easily.

Of course the term "a green salad" can be somewhat misleading because some lettuces are

Pat  
Leuchtman

Between  
The Rows



now red. Red Sails was an All America Winner last year and has become popular because it is so dependable, pretty and especially nutritious. It has six times the vitamin C and three times the vitamin A of iceberg. Other good red lettuces are Ruby and Red Salad Bowl.

But a green salad just begins with lettuce. Two speedy crops that are ideal to add a little interest are garden cress which can be harvested in just 10 days and Savanna mustard spinach which is ready in 25 days.

And don't think you need your own running stream to grow watercress. If you have cursed a shady wet spot all season, you may be able to grow and harvest watercress in just 50 days.

Arugula or rockquette is a green that has become very fashionable. Its ready to harvest in 35 days and the peppery tasting leaves and flowers are delicious in a salad.

The fashion in oriental cooking has meant that a number of new greens are readily available. Tyfon is a cross between Chinese cabbage and turnips and the mild flavored greens can be cooked or used in a salad. Like Tyfon, Narovit is ready in 45 days and resembles three other greens, Chinese cabbage, turnips and kale, though it most resembles the turnip.

All these greens can be planted as soon as you can work your soil and you can stagger plantings,

every 10 days or two weeks to keep the harvest coming. If the weather is very hot they will bolt, but in late summer you can start seeding them again. The days are shorter and in the cooler days of fall you can start another harvest.

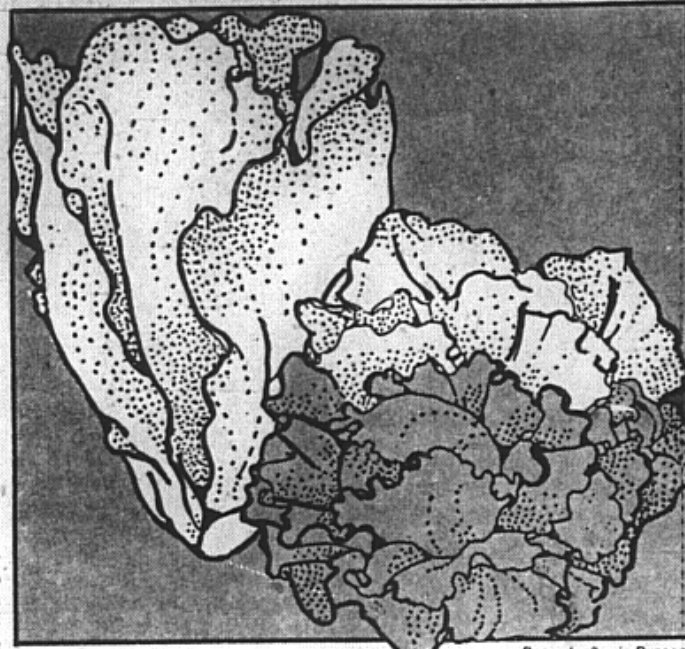
Most lettuces and greens are fairly tolerant of a less than rich soil, but it's always best to enrich your soil when you plant. Keep a compost pile going and use it freely.

The seeds of lettuce and other greens are small so they should not be planted deeply. Sprinkle fine soil over them and tamp down firmly. Then keep the seed bed well watered. It should remain moist until the seeds germinate and sprout. Greens are generally shallow rooted and the leaves have a high moisture content; even after they have sprouted, water them weekly if there is a dry spell. A deep watering (one inch) a week will keep them growing vigorously and evenly.

And if you crave some note of color in your green salad you can indeed add a handful of herb blossoms. Blue or pinkish borage blossoms add a subtle note, chive blossoms are more assertive. Or you can toss in a handful of elegant little violet, viola or pansy blossoms. They are all edible. And if you really want some color add some red and yellow nasturtiums.

A mixed green salad is wonderfully healthy and good for you. It can also be so beautiful that your soul will feel nourished as well.

Sources: *Burpee Seeds, Warminster, PA 18974; The Cook's Garden, P.O. Box 65, Londonderry, VT 05148, catalog \$1; Johnny's Selected Seeds, Foss Hill Road, Albion, ME 04910; Vermont Bean Seed Co., Garden Lane, Fair Haven, VT 05743.*



Recorder/Lucia Russom

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