

## How to Grow Lettuce

### General

Lettuce can be harvested from the garden from late spring to the late fall, and sometimes (given a bit of protection) all winter. The high protein chlorophyll in the dark-green leaves is highly nutritious. Your salads are not complete without these vitamins!

### Latin

*Lactuca sativa*  
Family: Asteraceae

### Difficulty

Easy

### Season & Zone

**Season:** Cool season

**Exposure:** Full sun to partial shade

**Zone:** 4-12

### Timing

Lettuce grows best in cool weather in the spring and fall. Sow in April every 2-3 weeks for a continual harvest. Using a cloche, cold frame, or greenhouse over mid-late August plantings can extend the harvest period right into winter. Optimal soil temperature for germination: 10-22°C (50-72°F). Seeds should sprout in 7-15 days, depending on conditions. Seeds don't sprout easily when the soil temperature is over 22°C (72°F) in summer. Get around this by sprouting them indoors in a cool area, or pre-sprout by sprinkling seeds on a damp paper towel and placing it in a plastic bag in the fridge for a few days. In hot weather lettuce goes to seed rapidly, so have new plantings ready to go.

### Starting

Direct sow or start indoors and transplant. Sow seeds 5mm (¼") deep, or on the surface of the soil where the soil can be kept evenly moist.. Space or thin heading lettuce to 30cm (12") apart. Space or thin loose leaf varieties to 20-25cm (8-10") apart. Space rows for all types 45-90cm (18-36") apart.

**Note on Pelleted Seeds:** A number of our lettuce seeds are pelleted for machine planting. The clay ball that covers each seed makes them easier to handle and easier to see when planted. While most lettuce seeds need to be barely covered (or sown on the surface of the soil), pelleted seeds need to be buried by about 1cm (1/2"). Please keep your newly sown pelleted seeds evenly moist - use more water than with conventional seeds. If the soil is allowed to dry out, the clay pelleting material can wick water away from the seed, causing uneven or lower germination.

### Growing

Ideal pH: 6.0-6.5. Aim for a soil with ample drainage and lots of organic matter. Add compost and lime at least 3 weeks prior to planting. 1 cup of complete organic fertilizer per 3m (10') of row will give adequate nutrition. Seedlings should be hardened off by reducing water and putting the plants outdoors 2 or 3 days before transplanting. This will help to prevent transplant shock and premature bolting. Regular watering is essential to prevent leaves from getting bitter. Most varieties will be ready for harvesting as baby leaves in half the days shown on the packet.

### Harvest

Pick individual leaves or wait and harvest full heads. Summer lettuces stays in prime eating condition only a short time, so harvest promptly and keep planting. In fall and winter the plants stay in good eating condition longer.

### Diseases & Pests

Crop rotation is also important for disease prevention. Tip burn (tips of leaves turning brown) is caused by a calcium deficiency. If you have limed, tip burn can be caused by nutrient imbalances or lack of moisture. Slugs are a problem in early and late plantings, so clean up their hiding places.

### Companion Planting

Lettuce plants make good companions for beets, Brassicas, carrot, celery, chervil, cucumbers, dill, garlic, onions, radish, spinach, squash, and strawberries.



Lettuce



Little Gem

