



Loose Leaf Lettuce

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Loose leaf lettuce is considered a cool-weather crop and is one of the simplest lettuces to grow; just plant, water, harvest and eat it. Seeds can be sown in late April for harvest before the weather becomes hot and dry. An additional crop may be planted in late July/early August for a fall harvest. Loose leaf lettuce varieties do not form a compact head. Picking leaves early and frequently from the bottom of the plant allows for multiple harvests while flavor tends to be mild and sweet. A cup of shredded leaf lettuce has about 5 calories and is an excellent source of vitamins A, C, K and B, and also contains calcium and iron.



Plant Requirements

Sun	Full Sun - six plus hours of sun daily
Soil	A pH range of .0 to 6.8 is optimal. Soil should be well drained and moisture retentive. Do not use fertilizer containing weed killer (“weed and feed”).
Soil Temp	Plant seeds directly in the garden once soil has warmed to 50 degrees and is dry enough to be worked, generally late April or early May.
Placement	Plant seeds ¼ to ½ inch deep and about 6 seeds per foot.

Plant Selection

- Days to Maturity - 45-50 days after planting, depending upon variety.

Planting Recommendations

- Lettuce has a shallow root, so avoid disturbing the soil around the plants when weeding.
- To avoid overcrowding and underproduction thin seedlings to approximately one plant every 5 inches.

Maintenance

Watering - Watering is important due to the shallow root systems. Frequent light watering results in rapid development and high-quality lettuce. If soil is sandy, it is better to water more than once a week.

Weeds - Scratch the soil just deeply enough to cut the weeds below the surface of the soil.

Diseases and Insects - Aphids may build up colonies on the underside of the leaves. A high-pressure spray of water



will knock aphids off the plant. Snails and slugs may cause holes in the leaves.

Questions or Problems – For assistance in diagnosing an unknown problem, visit the University of Minnesota Extension diagnostic site “What’s Wrong with my plant?” at <https://apps.extension.umn.edu/garden/diagnose/>

Harvest and Storage

- Lettuce will be crispier if watered often in the days prior to harvest and when it is harvested in the morning.
- Harvest anytime leaves are large enough to use, about 3-4 inches long.
- Picking individual leaves from the bottom of the plant while at the ‘baby’ stage and leaving most of the upper leaves on the plant will provide multiple harvests.
- Pick lettuce early and frequently for salads as the longer it grows, the more likely it will become bitter and tough.
- “Bolting” occurs when plants shift into flower production caused by high temperatures, long daylight hours and less moisture. Bolting causes extreme bitter flavor. At this time, harvest the remaining lettuce and remove the plants.
- Lettuce leaves should be free of wilt, rot and rust. To store lettuce wash, drip dry and place in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.
- Keep leafy greens separate from raw meat, poultry, seafood and their juices. Also, avoid storing lettuce with apples, pears and bananas to avoid decay and brown spots. Dispose of lettuce that looks slimy or has black spots.

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Loose Leaf Green Lettuce Salad for One

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons mild-flavored vegetable oil (canola or sunflower oil)
- 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 2 cups loose-leaf lettuce, rinsed thoroughly and drained

Optional ingredients: sliced radishes, finely sliced apples, cranberries

Instructions

- 1). Whisk oil, vinegar and sugar together in a small bowl.
- 2). Toss oil mixture over chilled lettuce and serve.