



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

Autumn Greens, Eggplant, and more

Kevin Milaeger

September was ideal for growing a luscious crop of greens. It was warmer than usual, and there was enough rain to satisfy the thirsty lettuce. Our garden has four kinds of lettuce, along with Swiss chard and dinosaur kale. All were planted on September 1st, and have been harvested twice so far. The greens garden is now ready for a third harvest, and it looks as though there will be at least one more after that. The plants were fertilized when first planted, but otherwise have had no care, except for hoeing a few weeds. You get a lot for very little effort, so don't tell me you don't have time to grow lettuce!



Greens planted - September 1

The dinosaur kale is the hardiest of the lot. It can easily take temperatures in the high 20's, and it oftentimes looks great as late as



Greens - October 7

Thanksgiving. It's tempting to let the leaves get really large. With their rich, gray green color, and their rugged texture, they are definitely attention grabbing. The large leaves are fine for cooking, but if you want to eat them raw you may want to harvest them when young, say less than 8" long. Large leaves can be bitter unless cooked. Some folks make an entire salad out of kale leaves. I prefer to use a small amount of kale, maybe ten percent of the "greens" portion of a salad.

There is still plenty of time to plant and harvest many greens. Since they grow at different rates, plant several kinds so you will always have something to pick. Plus, you'll have a broad flavor range. The

greens will thrive in the cooler temperatures ahead.

I've never been overly fond of eggplant. We never had it when I was a kid, and it looked so odd compared to the vegetables we were used to. Also, it had to be cooked, whereas many of my favorite vegetables I would eat raw. I've grown it a few times, just because I like the looks of it, and I like the interesting thorny leaves that some varieties have. But a friend of mine has gotten me interested in one particular variety called 'Rosa Bianca.' My friend is of Sicilian descent and she says they grow a lot of it in Sicily, where they call it 'Melanzana siciliana.' Shape is usually roundish, about the size of a baseball. Sometimes the fruit is egg shaped, and yet other times rather broad. It is richly colored with various shades of purple and lavender, streaked over the milky white flesh. My friend says its flavor is the mildest of all the eggplant she knows. She shared her recipe with me. [Here is a link to it.](#)



Dinosaur Kale

Like cucumbers, it is important to harvest eggplant as soon as it reaches mature size, or just before that time. If left on the plant too long, the fruit can become bitter. How do you know the mature size? Check the label or seed packet. Also, it should be shiny when ripe. If it stays on the plant too long, it loses the shine. This was a good summer for eggplant. They are native to subtropical India, and thrive in hot weather. That's why they do so well in Sicily, and the Mediterranean region in general. Eggplant has dense flesh; some might call it meaty. During times when people couldn't afford meat in their diets, they would substitute eggplant, and it found its way into many Italian dishes.



Eggplant Rosa Bianca

There are many vegetables that are fun to grow for their ornamental value. One such plant is the hot pepper. This year I grew 'Fatalii.' Like many types of hot peppers, it requires a long hot season to do well. I planted it the second week of June, when the weather was, I thought, definitely safe. Peppers are very sensitive to cold, and many folks plant them too early. Even though I planted in June, my plant seemed to take a while to get started---I think we were still having a few cool nights after I planted it. By July, it put on some heft and set fruit. It has quite a few peppers on it, and they have just started to turn brilliant yellow. Fruit size is about 2 1/2" long, and pointed. They are way too hot for me, similar to a habanero. The 'Fatalii' scoville

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rating (heat measurement scale)

ranges from 200,000 to 300,000, and

habaneros are about 250,000. Not a lot of people can eat 'Fatalii' by itself.

It's most often used for flavoring chili or salsa. Or you can just enjoy looking at them!

Pepper Fatalii