



Kevin Milaeger

*Milaeger's*

## Greens to Grow Blog 2014 February!

Kevin Milaeger

**Like clockwork**, every year right after the first of February, my dad would always say "Next month is spring." No matter how cold it might have been, that little bit of mid-winter optimism was reassuring for gardeners and non-gardeners alike.

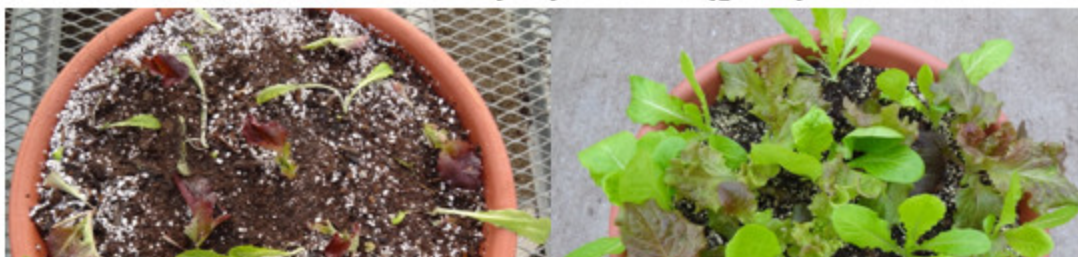
With spring's arrival not all that far off, we at Milaeger's have been busy tending

our early crops. Some of you remember the "Greens to Grow" program that we debuted last year. The program was designed to offer cold tolerant young plants that you could plant early, and later enjoy a tasty crop of fresh greens as early as April. Many of you tried them and we heard a number of success stories. We planted some in our trial garden and they did very well. (We also have an autumn program, with the first plants being offered in September, for harvest in October and November.) This year we have expanded the spring program, with greater selection and larger quantities. We recommend planting a variety of greens. Since all types don't mature or regenerate at the same rate, a regular supply is much more likely if several varieties are planted. Remember, most of these greens are "cut and come again" varieties, so you should get at least several pickings



off of each plant. But after several harvests, some of these plants start to get worn out and productivity declines, so we will have a second batch of plants ready a few weeks after the first. That should keep you supplied with fresh greens until the traditional planting season begins in May.

### Lettuce Merlot (red) & Jericho (green)





**just planted**



**two weeks**

This year we have added a number of new varieties of lettuce so we are now growing thirteen kinds (mostly romaine). A few new ones look particularly interesting. 'Merlot' is a bolt resistant, deep red variety that is frilly, yet crisp. Another new one is 'Truchas,' also dark red, but not frilly. Classified as a mini-romaine, this compact grower might be a good choice if you have limited space or if you are growing in containers. 'Dragoon' is another mini-romaine, but this one is green. It is also slow to bolt and has a desirable crispy texture. Rounding out this year's selection of greens are two types each of mustard greens, spinach, kale, mache, arugula, and Asian greens, and one each of radicchio, sorrel, and cress. If you'd like to add a little zing to your salad you can try one of our two kinds of mustard greens. These are both colorful and flavorful. Most folks will simply add a few bits of the "hot" mustard greens to a larger salad, but of course you can add as much as you like. Arugula is often used for the same purpose---to add zing. We have a tangy new variety called 'Wildfire.' [Here is a link](#) to a spreadsheet so you can check out all of our offerings.

### **Spinach Red Kitten**



**just planted**



**two weeks**

At Milaeger's we recommend planting out these greens as soon as the soil warms, usually around the last week of March. At that time, wait until the weather forecast is favorable for at least a few days, and then go ahead and plant them out. That favorable forecast should help the young plants get off to a decent start before another chilly period sets in. They will be able to tolerate any kind of "normal" weather that we have at that time of year. If you feel the need to protect your plants, you can cover them with row covers. Think of these as unheated mini greenhouses. In addition to protecting your plants from cold, the covers protect them from wind. Also, they can help shorten the crop time. These plants definitely want to get transplanted, but if you are unable to, you can leave them in their "packs" for a while and set them on a wagon. Simply leave the wagon outdoors, and put it back in your garage if the weather is exceedingly cold or windy. Remember that although these plants are tough, they are more at risk to the elements if they are still in their packs than if they were transplanted into the ground, so plant them as soon as you can. Another alternative is to plant your greens in "low bowls." These are typically 18" inches across and 4" deep, but other sizes are available. You can put quite a few plants in each bowl. Because the bowls aren't all that large you can easily take them in and out, depending on the weather. These bowls are ideal for those living in apartments or condos, especially if an outdoor deck or patio is available.

### **Kale Red Russian**





**just planted**



**two weeks**

The first harvest of the year is always very gratifying. After a long winter of not being able to harvest anything, the fresh, home grown greens are very welcome. Since we at Milaeger's are as antsy for spring as anyone, we planted up a few trial "low bowls" of greens on January 29. Above are some photos from the day I planted them, and more photos after two weeks. They grow fast! You could place these bowls in any sunny room, and they could sit outside whenever the temperature is above freezing (and not too windy.) We plan on having some available in the store soon. Start your own planning now---remember, next month is spring!