



Milaeger's

Greens to Grow

Kevin Milaeger

One look at most any current vegetable seed catalog will show you how much attention is being focused these days on the plant category known simply as "greens." Maine based Johnny's Seeds, for example, devotes eighteen pages to lettuce alone. Add to that kale, collards, cabbage, spinach and others and we see that a substantial part of the garden could be used just for our leafy friends. And that doesn't include Asian greens and "specialty" greens---another ten pages in Johnny's catalog. Sorting through all that information can be daunting, but you can relax because we've done it for you.



Lettuce Rouge d'Hiver

After a long winter, we can hardly wait for some healthy homegrown greens. This year for the first time we are growing an extra early crop of greens. These are all plants that are very cold hardy---you should be able to plant them as early as the end of March (weather permitting), and you can start harvesting some varieties within a month after planting. If you are unable to plant that early, you can just set them outside in the packs that we grow them in. They can easily stay in the packs until you can plant them, hopefully not more than a week or two. If the temperature takes a steep dive, you should bring them in; plants that are in containers are more sensitive to cold than plants that have been planted in the soil. Those plants in the ground could be covered with newspaper or plastic, in the event of extreme cold.



Upland Cress

This new group of greens numbers more than twenty and will be available only in the pre-season, as long as our supply lasts. However, we will be doing a second sowing of all of these, so you can plant a succession crop, to further your harvest. (We will have plenty of other greens available during the regular spring season.) These new plants can be harvested through spring, trailing off when the warm weather starts. (We are also planning a different crop that will be ready for planting in late summer, to be harvested in the fall.) Included in this first spring group are about nine kinds of lettuce, including some mixes, several types of spinach and kale, a few Asian greens, and a couple of "gourmet" greens---mache and orach. Many of these plants are referred to as "cut and come again" plants. Rather than removing all of the plant for harvest, you can pick off the outer leaves, or just the tops (depending on plant type), and a new crop will follow. Some can also be harvested as "baby greens"---when the leaves are far smaller than at their usual harvest time.



Kale Red Russian



Right now these plants are newly transplanted seedlings. The photo doesn't capture how cute these little plants are, but I thought you'd like to see them just the same. We are growing them in a cold greenhouse---a minimum of 55 degrees, and the cooling fans turn on if it gets over 66 degrees. They grow slowly at that temperature, but they will turn out much better than if grown warm.



Spinach Donkey

We will continue to send you updates about the progress of this new crop. In the meantime, if you have any questions about it, please [email me](#) directly. By the way, we are planning on planting some of each of these vitamin rich greens in our trial garden, and I'll keep you informed of that project, too.