



Kevin Milaeger

# Milaeger's

## Think Green! It's almost time to plant.

Kevin Milaeger

**When we think a bowl** of salad greens needs livening up, it's all too easy to reach for a bottle of salad dressing. But there is another way to liven up your salad. Try adding some different kinds of greens. You can get different flavors from various kinds of lettuce, but the distinctions are subtle, at least when compared with other kinds of greens. I'm not suggesting traveling to numerous grocery stores to get a wide selection; I'm talking about planting them outside your back door. They're easy to grow.



**Lettuce Salanova Premier Mix**

Let's begin by establishing what kind of greens we are talking about. Probably the strongest flavored "green" that is readily available is mustard (*Brassica juncea*). The leaves have a surprising amount of



**Mustard Red Rain**

heat, but it dissipates quickly, at least in my mouth. Because of the heat, most folks use a small amount of this in their salad---just a pinch. I generally chop one large leaf into small pieces and blend it into two salad bowls. That's just enough zing for me. Besides its tangy flavor, the plant looks fantastic in the garden. There are many types of mustard; some have purplish leaves, others are frilly, and some are both.

Another taste variation comes from highly nutritious kale. Not to everyone's liking, but I think that's mostly due to eating kale that is well past maturity. We recommend harvesting it when it's young, when the flavor is still subtle. Like mustard, we use a fairly small percentage of kale in a larger bowl of greens. Also like mustard, many kale varieties are visually stunning. Keep that in mind when



placing it in the garden. There is no reason the vegetable garden can't be beautiful.

Spinach is another green to add to the flavor matrix. We all know it is highly nutritious, and especially high in antioxidants, too. The leaves can be harvested when small or full grown. I always pick the outer leaves when small, and allow the inner leaves to mature. Really large leaves are best served steamed, to reduce bitterness. For raw salads, pick them young. Also, just pick what you need for a particular meal; the nutritional value diminishes as spinach sits in the fridge. Spinach is a much darker green than



**Kale Red Ursa**

most every other green, so it adds another color to your salad, and another sense is stimulated.



**Lettuce Fossey**

All of the above are typically added to one or more kinds of lettuce. If you don't want to grow multiple kinds of lettuce, try our European Mesclun Mix, created by the Baker Creek seed company. Mesclun is one of those words that can mean many things, because it really just means "mix." So, whatever is put into the seed mix is okay; there is no correct mix, though some are doubtless tastier than others. "European Mesclun" sounds somewhat exotic, and that appeals to our inquisitive

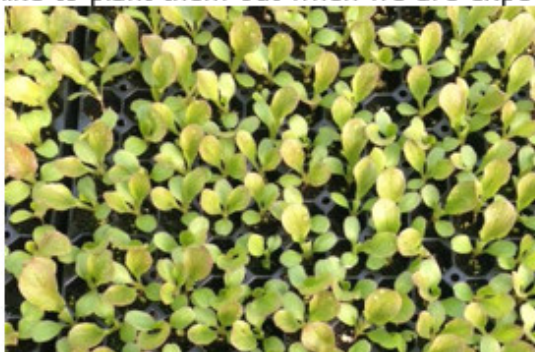
culinary habits. This particular mixture includes lettuce, radicchio, arugula, endive, orach, mizuna, kale, mustard, corn salad (mache) and more. Since these are planted one plant per cell, and three cells per pack, you will need multiple packs to make sure you get the full mixture.

All of these greens and many more are part of the "Greens to Grow" program that we have offered for several years. Around April 1, we will have starter plants available for you. This year we have over thirty kinds in production, and over half of them are different kinds of lettuce. [Here is a link](#) to the G2G spreadsheet. You can plant them out around April 1, if the weather is halfway decent, and if the immediate forecast is favorable. I



**Lettuce Truchas**

like to plant them out when we are expecting a few days of better than average weather, so they get a chance to get established before another cold snap hits us. If you happen to buy them during a cold spell, just put them outside for a short time every day so they can "harden off." Then you can plant them outside when the weather improves, and they will already be acclimated. It's fun to serve the tasty, uncommon greens to guests--





**Lettuce Marshall**

-most are amazed at how early one can grow their own fresh greens.

Returning to the subject of salad dressing, I've been searching for a tasty, healthy, light recipe that does not call for vinegar. (I used to love

vinegar but now it makes me cough.) I've found an easy recipe that's to my liking, but I am still tinkering with the proportions. The primary ingredient is extra virgin olive oil; to this you simply add fresh lemon juice, and fresh ground salt and pepper. I've also tried adding basil and other herbs. Once I perfect it maybe I'll bottle it and call it "Milaeger's Own," with my mug on the bottle. But then it would be just another bottled dressing.

Please email me ([kevin@milaegers.com](mailto:kevin@milaegers.com)) if you have any questions or comments.



**Lettuce De Morges Braun**

