



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

Yep! ----It's Time to Plant Greens!

Kevin Milaeger

Our Greens to Grow (G2G) spring program is now ready and we have about thirty kinds for you to choose from; about half are lettuce. While walking the greenhouses, I've nibbled on a few of the greens, just to try some of the new ones. The lettuces all tasted good and sweet, but I always crave the mustard greens. They have a certain tanginess that I like. I used to think of them as "hot" but since the heat dissipates so quickly I think tangy, or maybe zesty, might be a more accurate word. I encourage you to try them; adjust the amount you use in a salad to your personal taste. They're attractive in the garden, too.



In the trial garden, I don't plant a whole bunch of any one kind of greens. I try to do a little of everything. I need to report my results to you with actual



experience. Many of these I have grown before, but of course every year is different, so it makes sense to pay attention to how things fare in different years, under a variety of conditions. I'm often surprised by the differences.

Growing these plants is pretty simple. We now have a poster with cultural information posted near the plants. We encourage you to use your phone and take a photo of it, so you have it for future reference. We used to offer handouts, but they are often mislaid, and this way we save paper, too. Now you'll have it until you delete it. [Here is a link](#) to

the poster.

Like many other vegetables, greens can be grown in pots. I would recommend something that is at least 12" in diameter, because a larger size requires more soil and so it's less likely to dry out. Lettuce likes water so it must be watered often, but not heavily. This is not a problem early in the season, but as the weather warms and the plants get larger, they need more and more



water. If you are going to be away for a few days, move your pot to a shady area, and put a saucer underneath so it won't dry out; keeping it out of the wind helps too. In June, the garden soil is usually still cool, especially if you dig down a little.

But pots are surrounded by warm air, so the soil heats up faster. As a result, it's hard to do a good job with the lettuce in a pot after the weather warms.

johnnyseeds.com



Lettuce Cherokee

they have a number of summer lettuces that they recommend. Johnny's is based in Maine, so their climate is not too dissimilar from ours. I gave them a call to ask them for their recommendations. They gave me six to try: 'New Red Fire' (leaf, red), 'Starfighter' (leaf, green), 'Coastal Star' (Romaine, green), 'Adrianna' (Butterhead, green), 'Skyphos' (Butterhead, red), and 'Cherokee' (Summer Crisp, red). I ordered a sample of each. Johnny's recommends sowing directly (not transplants) in Mid-May, with a harvest starting 48-55 days later. I've got my fingers crossed.

Our larger garden is a rectangle, so everything will be in nice rows. But I know not everyone has a large garden where they can plant in rows. It's okay to plant your greens any way you like. If your garden is an irregular shape, you can just spot the plants wherever you can squeeze them in. In olden

times (before the industrial revolution), the cook of the house (or cottage) would have the vegetables and herbs planted right outside the kitchen door, in a seemingly haphazard fashion.

johnnyseeds.com



The leaves eventually become bitter, and there is no way to change that once it starts. If you see a flower stalk starting to form, you know that the flavor is going to change (it may have already.) Pull out the plants and put in a new, heat loving crop such as beans, summer squash, or pumpkins. You can plant greens again at summer's end.

True, there are many lettuces that are advertised as heat tolerant, bolt resistant, or slow to bolt. I try one or two every year but haven't found anything that thrives in midsummer. Maybe some of you could recommend varieties that have worked for you. I've carefully read Johnny's Seed catalog (a company we buy lots of seed from) and



Lettuce Coastal Star

Everything had to be handy, and as space was scarce, only plants that served a useful purpose were generally allowed. It became known as a "kitchen garden." Oftentimes the gardener would manage to tuck a few flowers in because their beauty was irresistible, and these became known as "cottage garden flowers." This was way back before garden centers or nurseries were common. Most folks just traded plants and seeds.



Lettuce New Red Fire

was about two weeks ago, and they still haven't sprouted. Of course the seed will germinate eventually, but I like the starter plants better than seed, especially for the first planting. You can plant either of them early, but with the plants you start with something that is already a month old---a considerable jump on the season. (We've been growing them in a cool house, so they don't get floppy and they will acclimate easily.) But seed is fun too; it seems almost magical when they sprout. You all know about our snowfall on Thursday, March 24. It covered my yet unsprouted seeds. Here is a photo of part of the garden---note the white row markers for the lettuce and spinach. I guess this proves I am an optimist, if nothing else.

I recently reported that I sowed some spinach and lettuce seed on March 15. The G2G plants weren't yet ready, so that's why I decided to try the seed. That



**snow covered
newly sown lettuce**

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