



**Kevin Milaeger**

*Milaeger's*

## Stay Healthy--- Plant Some Greens

Kevin Milaeger

**These days we probably** all need to get outside more. Planting early greens is a great activity, and very rewarding. The plants we are offering now have all been selected for their ability to tolerate cool weather. We all know that we can still experience temperatures in the low 20's, so here is what I do. After April 1st, I keep an eye on the weather forecast. When we are expecting a week or so of moderate temperatures, (that is, night temperatures above freezing), I go ahead and plant. That will give the plants a chance to get established so they can better handle future cold snaps that are inevitable. If the cold



**overview of Green to Grow**

snaps are extreme, or if there's high wind, I cover the plants with "frost cloth," which we have in our stores. Most years, I start to harvest within ten days of planting. I harvest the outer leaves so that the plant continues to produce new leaves for many weeks. Use a knife, don't tear them off. If you want to harvest the entire head, you'll have to wait several weeks. I think it's best to grow as many different types as possible. You want greens to be available continuously, and they all grow at different rates. If you grow a broad variety, you should always have plenty.



**Buckley lettuce**

This year we have 41 kinds of cold hardy greens. Of those, 22 are lettuce, and of those 22, nine are leaf lettuces. Leaf lettuce is the most nutritious kind of lettuce, especially the dark leaved types.

But the romaine lettuces (seven kinds) are the most popular. [Here is a link to our complete selection.](#) When you visit our stores, ask for "Greens to Grow." Of course, delivery can be arranged if you are unable to visit us, and we also offer curbside pickup.



After lettuce, there are other worthy greens. Spinach, kale, and mustard should be included in your garden. In the salads I make, I always



**New Red Fire lettuce**

try to include a small amount of each of these three. They enhance the flavor range. It's important to pick them at the right stage of their growth, especially kale and spinach. These should be harvested when their leaves are about half their mature size, and eaten promptly after picking. That's when their flavor is best. Later harvests will have

stronger flavor, tending towards bitterness. Some people like that, but most do not. These greens, and the lettuces, can also be harvested as "baby greens." That is, when they are about two inches tall. However, baby greens have less nutritional value than mature greens. The mustard greens (we have six kinds) you can allow to get large without compromising the quality and flavor. At least, that's my experience so far.



**Flashy Trout's Back lettuce**

at the right stage of their growth, especially kale and spinach. These should be harvested when their leaves are about half their



**Cherokee lettuce**

Rounding out our greens offerings are arugula, Swiss chard, and endive. A couple weeks ago, before all the restaurants were shut down, I was served a salad, the greens of which were entirely arugula. Usually, arugula is part



**Spicy Green mustard**

of a greens mix. I was surprised how good it was, given its sometimes pungent flavor. I suspect it has something to do with the time it is picked. In this case it was in a Caprese salad, so the other ingredients may have tempered the flavor. Swiss chard is especially valuable because it does really well in the warm months when most of the lettuces fade. Also, the variety we offer adds a bright spot of color to the garden. Endive is the least understood of the greens, and many gardeners don't even know what it tastes like. It, too, has a sharper flavor, but it's a nice accent for the other greens, in flavor and color.

Also worth noting are some herbs that will tolerate the cool weather. Thyme, mint, rosemary, and oregano are all ready now. Chives and parsley will be ready soon. You can also plant onion sets, but that is a topic for another blog.



Most people probably think they're doing the right thing when they are grocery shopping in the vegetable area, rather than the chip aisle

or the pizza aisle. They are right, but few realize how much more nutritious vegetables are when they are home grown. Depending on the variety, vegetables lose a significant amount of their nutritional value from the time they are harvested to the time they arrive at the grocery store and finally to your table. Lucky for us, there is a solution—grow your own vegetables. You can start right now with greens.



**Surrey arugula**