

Jump Start the Season with Greens to Grow!



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In southeast Wisconsin it's way too early to plant most folks' favorite vegetables—tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, and eggplant. But there are plenty of other edibles that can be planted now. We've just put our "[Greens to Grow](#)" plants on the benches in our greenhouses, and they can be planted now. They may look fragile, but they're built to withstand the cool temperatures that we're still bound to get. If chilled, they might pout a little, but they'll recover. This year we have over forty varieties of greens, something for every taste. Most are lettuces, but also kale, arugula, endive, mustard, spinach, and Swiss chard. All grow at different rates, so plant an assortment so you'll always have something to pick. If our weather is halfway decent, you should be able to start picking some lettuce leaves (I like to harvest the outer leaves and let the center keep on producing) in two or three weeks.



"Greens to Grow"



**Lettuce (French Crisp)
Nevada**

It's always fun to grow things from seed. Kind of magical, really. It takes very little time, for example, to sow a few rows of radishes. You plant what looks like tiny pieces of dirt, and in a week or a little more, you'll see a cheery little row of radish greenery, followed a few weeks after by scrumptious radish roots. Colorful, too! You simply can't compare the taste of radishes you grew to those bought in the store. Don't even try. This is a great activity for kids. It gets them outdoors for one thing. Plus, it teaches them patience, and delayed gratification. Maybe you can even get them to eat something they just pulled out of the ground. Note: once radishes have sprouted, make sure they're watered frequently. This is a requirement, not a suggestion.



**Lettuce (Romaine)
Cimmaron**



**Lettuce – 3 weeks after
planting**

Another seed you can plant now is carrots. Compared to radishes, they're a much more delayed gratification. But no less satisfying. Unlike the sharp taste of a radish, a homegrown carrot is remarkably sweet. Evidence of this is in the name of many varieties that emphasize the sweetness. Pulling a beautiful orange root out of the ground and promptly eating it really connects you with mother earth. You get a real lesson where food comes from. This year I'm going to use seed tape for my carrots. This minimizes the amount of thinning of seedlings that is normally done after they sprout. Thinning seedlings is tedious, and hard on the back, especially for us seasoned citizens. Seed tape spaces out the seeds with correct

spacing, so no thinning required. Carrots will germinate in about a week if the weather is warm, but they're fairly slow to mature, so be patient.



Some of this year's carrot seed selection



Yellow onion starter plants

Onions and their relatives such as garlic, leek, and shallot, can also be planted now. First, determine what kind of onions you want to grow—scallions (green table onions), or large globe onions. Either can be planted now. We have “starter” plants for both types. We grow them as a bunch in a 3” pot. To plant, get the soil in the pot thoroughly wet, sloppy wet, so the seedlings can be separated easily without damaging them. Then simply lay the plants in a shallow furrow that you can create with your hand if the soil is worked up properly, or with a trowel. Space the seedlings according to the mature size of the onion. Large onions can also be grown from “sets,” which are marble sized onions, usually sold by the pound. Simply put each little onion in a hole, a few inches deep. Keep well-watered, but not too much, especially if your soil doesn't drain well. Large onions are normally harvested when the tops dry and turn brown.



For years, the turning over of the soil in spring meant the start of the gardening season. Starting anew, compost could be worked in, and after it was raked out, planting would be easy. This turning of the soil could be done by hand, but larger gardens are usually done with a roto-tiller. It's an arduous task, if done by hand. Nowadays some folks question whether the ground should be turned. I think some of that thinking is founded on the idea of conserving water, of concern in some parts of the country where fresh water isn't plentiful. Tilled soil dries out faster, and it's also felt that tilling turns up weed seeds and more weeding is then required. I'm all for tilling because it makes planting, either young plants or seed, much easier. Its also the most opportune way for adding compost to your soil. I just like working the soil. It makes me smile.



Edi-bowls

Please email me (kevin@milaegers.com) with your questions and comments!

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