

Yes, It's Time to Plant Early Greens



Written by: Kevin Milaeger
April 2nd, 2024

Many folks are wary about planting cold hardy greens at this time of year. We've been doing it for so many years that I have absolutely no qualms about recommending planting at this time. Of course you have to use your head. For example, if we recommend a date of April 1 for planting the hardy greens, and we have snowfall on that day, or maybe we are in the middle of an extra cold snap, then wait until it passes. Its best for the plants, if, once planted, there is a stretch of fairly mild weather for them to get a decent foothold. Its just common sense.



Dave Milaeger with Greens to Grow

This year our [Greens to Grow program](#) has much to offer. We've made a few changes, always trying a few new varieties. Lettuce is our biggest category. We prefer the leaf lettuces because you can harvest them early, and continue harvesting them as they grow. We have about 21 kinds of lettuce, but we prefer the red/burgundy types as they are the most nutritious and they add color to a salad. Check out two new types—'Cegolaine' and 'Lunix.' Spinach can also be planted now and we have several types. I like the flat leaf kinds because the wrinkle leaf types often get dirt caught up in the wrinkles and so take more prep time. Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and collards, all cole crops, love the cool weather and can also be planted now. Our current offering also includes arugula, kale, Brussels sprouts, celery, chard, and endive. But for me the most important and fun thing to plant early is mustard greens. We have five kinds including a new one called 'Green Wave.' These plants are unrelated to the mustard condiment. They are eaten simply as raw greens. I wouldn't call them hot, but they definitely have a spicy tang. But, perception of heat is subjective so you should try for yourselves. Every gardener that I've spoken with about the "heat" agrees that it dissipates quickly, in just a few seconds. Unlike say, jalapeño peppers where the heat stays in your mouth for a while. The mustard greens really liven up a salad. I use them in moderation, maybe a couple leaves chopped up and added to a large salad. If the spiciness is a bit much for you, just use less in a salad and enjoy their ornamental value. The mustard plants are beautiful, especially the burgundy colored sorts. I wouldn't doubt that some folks grow them just for their ornamental value. Like the leaf lettuces, you can harvest the leaves a little at a time, as the plant continues to grow.

Photo courtesy of
IvyGarth



Lettuce 'Australian Yellow' (loose leaf)

Photo courtesy of

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseeds.com



Lettuce 'Lunix' (oakleaf)

Photo courtesy of
Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseeds.com



Lettuce 'Flashy Trout's Back' (romaine)

Photo courtesy of

IvyGarth

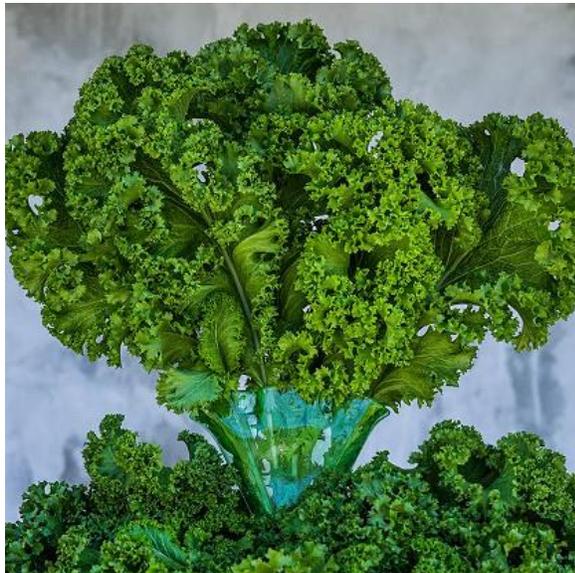


Spinach 'Tye'

Your early gardening needn't stop with greens. You can also plant rhubarb, asparagus, onions—from sets or seed, radishes from seed, and garlic. For me radishes are the most fun. I recommend sharing the experience with kids. Radishes grow very quickly and are pretty fool proof. Germination varies with the temperature, but usually five days or so. When they are an inch or more tall, thin them out. Keep them evenly watered—very important. You can harvest the early types in as little as a month. Its very gratifying, and the flavor is incomparable.

Photo courtesy of

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseeds.com



Mustard 'Green Wave'
(spice green)

Photo courtesy of

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/rareseeds.com



Mustard 'Red Giant'

Photo courtesy of

IvyGarth



**Brussels Sprouts
'Diablo'**

Photo courtesy of

IvyGarth



**Cauliflower 'Snow
Crown'**

If you're ready for some spring color, we have a selection of tough flowering plants that are ready now, and can be planted any time. Pansies are available in many colors and are so cheerful. Snapdragons for some vertical accent. Alyssum for edging or trailing. Dianthus, their starry flowers are usually pink or red, sometimes bicolors, and often very fragrant. Stock, that wonderful old-fashioned plant, also with a sweet, heady fragrance. Large flowered anemone available in blue is another charmer. And the exquisite flowers of ranunculus in numerous colors such as orange, red, yellow, and pink. So much is available to brighten your garden!



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