

GROW IT

LEAFY GREENS

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 Get It

- 🔥 Purchase high-quality seed that was packaged for the current year from a reputable supplier.
- 🔥 Leafy greens can be grown from transplants, but direct seeding works fine and is often the simplest way to begin.


 Plant It

- * Leafy greens (kale, collards, mustard, spinach, lettuce and Swiss chard) are cool-season crops that can withstand frost but don't grow as well in hot weather. Therefore, there are often two crops grown in the early to mid-spring and early to late fall in Tennessee.
- * The most cold hardy greens (kale, collards, mustard and spinach) can be seeded from mid-February to early April for a spring crop and then again in mid- to late August to early October.
- * Other greens (lettuce, beet greens and Swiss chard) can be seeded in March and April for a spring crop and then again in August and September for a fall crop.
- * Greens can be grown well in gardens and raised beds. If space is an issue, containers are a great option because the plants don't need support.
- * All containers need to have drains to keep the potting mix from being saturated with water. Lettuce, turnip greens and spinach should be grown in containers that hold 2-3 gallons of potting mix, while kale and collards are probably better off in containers that hold 3-5 gallons of potting mix.
- * After sowing, cover seeds with ¼ to ½ inch of potting mix or soil. Kale, collards and Swiss chard need 8-12 inches between plants, while mustard, lettuce, turnips, beet greens and spinach can be sown closer—2-6 inches between plants. If you harvest the leaves small, plants can be seeded closer.



- ★ Adding some granular fertilizer at planting will provide nutrients for the growing plant. A 4-foot-by-8-foot raised bed could be fertilized with $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup of 10-10-10 fertilizer. Evenly mix the fertilizer into the top 2 inches of soil or growing mix.
- ★ Leafy greens do well with consistent moisture and well-drained soil or potting mix. Keep in mind that watering will be needed less often in the cooler spring and fall seasons.
- ★ Slow growth or yellowish older leaves means there might not be enough nutrients available. After about three weeks, you can add 1-2 tablespoons of water soluble fertilizer in 2-4 gallons of water weekly in a 4-foot-by-8-foot raised bed to keep the leafy crops growing well.



- ◆ You can harvest the whole plant or individual leaves whenever the leaves are the size that you prefer to eat. Remember, baby greens are just leafy crops harvested at a young age.
- ◆ Since they can be planted in the spring or fall, these plants will be harvested in the late spring or early summer and late fall. The flavor and quality of these greens is often better when they are maturing under cool temperatures.
- ◆ You can keep harvesting these leafy greens into the warmer spring and summer temperatures as long as the quality and taste is good.
- ◆ Likewise, winter harvest is also possible for fall seeded greens. Some (kale and spinach, for example) can even overwinter and you may find another opportunity to harvest in February, March and April of the next year.



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