

GREEN HARVEST

Useful hints & tips for the garden

VARIATIONS ON A SPROUTING THEME © Frances Michaels

Microgreens or how to produce salad greens in the heat of summer - or when you only have a kitchen bench available and no garden.

Microgreens, salad mix, mesclun and baby leaf are new terms for many gardeners. So what are they and are they worth growing in the home garden?

What are Microgreens?

Microgreens are basically many of the same leafy greens as are used for salad mixes but are cut at a smaller stage and only harvested once. They are eaten as thin, delicate plants, the smallest possible variation on salad greens and herbs. They provide texture and colour when used as garnish, or exciting flavours when used as part of a salad mixes. Think of microgreens as a cross between a salad mix and sprouts. Sprouts belong in the province of the kitchen and are not really part of the gardener's domain. While sprouts are well known for their health benefits they are not famous for their flavour whereas microgreens are both healthy and a taste sensation. Green Harvest Salad Mix can be also be used as a delicious, nutritious microgreen mix.

Why Grow Microgreens?

You don't need a garden, just sunlight, to produce abundant supplies of nutritious microgreens.

How to Grow Microgreens

Microgreens are best grown in seedling trays or recycled styrofoam boxes. They differ from sprouts in that they are grown in sunlight and usually harvested when there are 4 or more true leaves whilst sprouts are eaten much smaller. For your soil mix choose between organic, potting mix (look for an organic certification number on the bag), cocopeat, vermiculite, sieved compost or worm castings. If the trays or boxes have large holes in the base that allow the soil mix to leak out, try covering the base first with a single sheet of slightly moistened newspaper. To grow a batch of microgreens fill the tray with your selected soil mix 2 - 3 cm deep and moisten the mix. Soak the seed overnight then sprinkle the seeds evenly on top of the mix and gently pat them down; then cover with 0.5 cm of mix. Cover the tray with a lid or another inverted tray to help keep the seeds moist until they sprout. Water often using a sprayer. Adding diluted organic nutrients e.g. kelp or compost tea to the sprayer will improve the nutrient levels in the microgreens. When a microgreen tray is finished, add it to the compost or offer it to your chooks. These general instructions apply to the suggested vegetable choices below. There are also more specific instructions for grains such as wheat grass.

Where to Grow Microgreens

You can grow them indoors on a well-lit bench or outdoors on a covered deck or in a shadehouse. Indoors start them in a warm place like a kitchen then once they sprout they should be moved to a window or sunny spot.

How to Harvest Microgreens

Microgreens are usually harvested when there are four or more leaves. Cut the shoots just above ground level with scissors. Many types will regrow and can be cut several times. Afterwards the tray contents can be added to the compost heap.

Safety tips: Use only organically certified or untreated seed. Avoid seed that may have been fumigated or treated with a fungicide.



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SOIL-LESS TRAY CULTURE - mainly used for grains

Line a seedling tray with 2 - 3 layers of paper towel to keep seed from falling through. If preferred, the tray can be filled with 2 cm of organic potting mix. Spread the soaked seed evenly across tray. Cover the tray with a lid or damp paper towel just until the green shoots appear. Place the tray indoors on a well-lit bench or outdoors on a covered deck.

Seed Type	Sow When	Soaking Time	Quantity of Seed	Watering	Details	Days to Harvest
Cress	Best at 16 - 25 °C; avoid hot weather.	Wash seed then soak 4 - 8 hours.	On a saucer lined with folded paper towel: 1 tbsp In a seedling tray: 4 - 6 tbsp.	Keep moist using a sprayer. Add diluted organic nutrients eg kelp or compost tea to the sprayer.	The easiest and first ever microgreen; saucer culture is fun for kids to add cress to their sandwich.	4 days; harvest once the green leaves appear. Cut just above the seed with scissors.
Barley Grass		Wash seed then soak 8 - 12 hours.	Use 1½ - 2 cups per seedling tray.		Harvest at 10 - 15 cm; may be cut several times.	6 - 9 days; harvest once the green leaves appear. Cut just above the seed with scissors.
Oat Grass		Wash seed then soak 1 - 4 hours.	Pre-sprouting grain in jar or bag after soaking is highly recommended. To pre-sprout place soaked seed in a sprouter for 2 - 3 days, rinse and drain twice a day until tiny roots appear.			
Wheat Grass	Best at 20 - 25 °C; avoid winter.	Wash seed then soak 6 - 12 hours.				



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TRAY CULTURE WITH SOIL

Fill the seedling tray with your selected soil mix 2 - 3 cm deep and moisten the mix. For your soil mix choose between organic potting mix (look for an organic certification number on the bag), cocopeat, vermiculite, sieved compost or worm castings. Soak the seed overnight then sprinkle the seeds evenly on top of the mix and gently pat them down; then cover with 0.5 cm of mix. Cover the tray with a lid or another inverted tray to help keep the seeds moist until they sprout.

Seed Type	Sow When	Soaking Time	Quantity of Seed	Watering	Details	Days to Harvest
Linseed / Flaxseed	Best at 16 - 25 °C; avoid hot weather.	Don't soak the seed.	On a saucer lined with folded paper towel: 1 tbsp In a seedling tray spread ¼ - ½ cup evenly and sparsely on top of the mix. There should be space around each seed. Do not cover seed.	Keep moist using a sprayer. Add diluted organic nutrients eg kelp or compost tea to the sprayer.	Linseed is highly mucilaginous so cannot be grown in a sprouter.	5 - 6 days; harvest once the green leaves appear. Cut just above the seed with scissors.
Buckwheat	Best at 20 - 25 °C; avoid winter.	Wash seed then soak 20 - 30 minutes. Pre-sprouting in a jar or bag after soaking is highly recommended. To pre-sprout, place soaked seed in a sprouter for 2 - 3 days, rinse and drain twice a day until tiny roots appear.	Use 1 - 1½ cups per seedling tray.		Harvest at 5 - 10 cm. Cut just above the seed with scissors. Late germinating seeds will be missed in the 1st cut, so keep watering.	
Sunflower		Harvest at 7 - 10 cm; before true leaves appear, as these are tough. Cut just above the seed with scissors. Late germinating seeds will be missed in the 1st cut, so keep watering.			8 - 12 days; harvest once the green leaves appear. Cut just above the seed with scissors.	
All other vegetable choices	Grow at the appropriate time of year for optimal germination of the seed.	Wash seed then soak 4 - 8 hours or overnight.	Fill the tray with soil soil mix 2 - 3 cm deep and moisten the mix. Sprinkle the soaked seeds evenly on top of the mix and gently pat them down; then cover with .5 cm of mix. Cover the tray with a lid or another inverted tray to help keep the seeds moist until they sprout.		Harvest just as the 'true leaves' begin to appear. The first set of leaves are called 'seed leaves'. This will be at about 2 - 4 cm high. Cut just above the soil mix with scissors. Late germinating seeds may be missed in the 1st cut, so keep watering. To replant another batch, pull the remains of the stems out, add a small quantity of fresh soil mix, and start again.	Most of the vegetables choices can also be grown larger, to 7 - 10 cm and harvested as 'baby leaf' or salad mix.

[Download for free: Green Harvest Sprouting, Wheatgrass and Microgreen Guide \(625KB\)](#)



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