



## *Growing Lettuce in Containers*

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Is it too muddy to plant early vegetables in your garden? Have you ever thought about growing lettuce in a container right outside your door?

According to a recent National Gardening Association newsletter, “There are few things more welcome to winter-weary gardeners than the first signs of spring in the plant world—buds swelling, asparagus tips poking through the soil, the cheerful blossoms of crocuses opening their faces to the sun. And there are few things that taste better to a vegetable gardener than the tender lettuce and greens of the season’s first homegrown salad. There is a wide variety of lettuces and greens that thrive in cool spring weather. Now is the time to sow some seeds so you can soon be enjoying that delicious first harvest.”

There are many different kinds of lettuces and salad greens that are easy to grow and provide a nutritious, attractive, and tasty mix for your salad bowl.

**Leaf lettuces** are fast growing plants that are ready for harvest in as little as 45 days, even less for a light harvest of baby leaves. You can harvest the entire plant or extend your harvest by selectively picking the outer leaves.

**Butterhead lettuce**, also called bibb or Boston lettuce, has especially tender, succulent leaves that form a loose head. The leaves of some varieties are tinged with red.

**Head lettuce** includes the familiar ‘Iceberg’ variety and forms a firm head of crisp, juicy leaves.

**Romaine lettuce** forms a loose head of sturdy, elongated green leaves. Romaine and leaf lettuce are the highest in nutrition among all the lettuces.

**Salad greens** such as arugula, corn salad and mizuna are cold-tolerant and easy to grow, offer an early harvest, and add zest, nutrition, and interest to your salad bowl.

Lettuce is tolerant of cool soil and cool weather, so you can plant seeds in a well-prepared seedbed as much as 4 weeks before your last frost date. To keep your harvest going and to make sure you have enough, but not too much, lettuce ready to pick at any one time, make successive, small sowings every 10-14 days.

If your seed bed is too muddy, then pull out some large containers and plant a mixture of lettuce! I just need to figure out a way to keep the squirrels out of my containers on the deck!

If you can plant in the garden, try a Fresh and Early 4 x 4-foot Salad Garden. Plants you’ll need for your salad garden include: 6-10 spinach plants, 1-3 kale plants, 6-8 buttercrunch lettuce plants, 1 curled parsley or flat Italian parsley plant, 1 arugula plant, 2 romaine lettuce plants, 1 onion chives plant, and 2 red sails lettuce plants.

Want to grow more greens? Take a look at the University of Maryland Extension’s website and read about Salad Tables and Salad Boxes. Fact Sheet HG6012012 provides complete supply lists and directions to build both container gardens. The salad table can be moved to capture sunlight in spring and fall and avoid the sun and high heat of summer. Best of all, you can garden comfortably at waist level and avoid problems with rabbits and groundhogs. The salad box is the baby version of the Salad table and works especially well for kids and folks with small spaces.

If you want to learn about one of Ohio’s native trees, the **Pawpaw**, plan to attend our garden seminar on **April 20<sup>th</sup>** at 7:00 p.m.

All seminars are held at the Mt. Orab campus of Southern State Community College in Room 107 and are free and open to the public.

This week as I walked to the mailbox it was hard to ignore the weeds coming up in the Perennial Bed. As I studied the emerging plants this quote came to mind, “When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant!”

