

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Family  
**Vegetable  
Garden**  
Series

EXTENSION BULLETIN E-824 (B)

# GREENS

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**GREENS** are special vegetables because you can use them in so many ways. Eat them raw in salads or sandwiches. Cook greens and serve as hot vegetable side dishes. Season your favorite soup with greens, or use them in an omelet or souffle.

As a special plus, greens are loaded with vitamins A and C, and minerals, such as calcium and iron.



## *Recommended Varieties*

### SWISS CHARD

*Rhubarb*  
*Fordhook Giant*

### BEETS

*Ruby Queen*  
*Detroit Dark Red*

### MUSTARD

*Green Wave*  
*Tendergreen*

### COLLARDS

*Vates*

### KALE

*Dwarf Blue Curled*  
*Vates*

### TURNIPS

*Tokyo Cross*  
*Seven Top*

### SPINACH

*America*  
*Viking*



Greens are like salad crops in many ways. In fact, many greens are grown just for salads. (See No. 10 in this series: Salad Stuff.)

Greens don't have to grow in straight rows in a big garden plot. They grow just as well and look nice in flower beds, as borders along walkways and even in flower pots or window boxes.

Greens grow best in cool weather, so in early spring or in fall, when it's too cold for many plants—GREENS GROW GREAT!



Long rows of beets, turnips, mustard and spinach should *not* be planted all at once, or you will have more greens than you can eat at one time. Begin in early spring and plant about a four-foot row of each. Then every two weeks until May, plant another short row. This is called **SUCCESSIVE PLANTING**, a practice that will assure you a continuous supply of tender, fresh greens.



Collards, kale and chard can be planted all at once in the early spring, or in late July for a fall crop. As they grow, cut off and use the outer leaves and new leaves will keep growing in the centers of the plants. You'll be able to harvest for a long time from a few plants.

### Turnip Tops and Beet Tops

For tops only, grow these close together in rows or scattered in a corner of a flower bed or garden. If you want to grow big roots too, plant the rows about 18 inches apart. When plants are small, thin them so the beets are three inches apart and the turnips four to six inches apart. (See No. 7 in this series: Root Crops.) In addition to the usual ways of using greens stir-fry turnip tops in sesame oil for a crisp vegetable in oriental dishes. Use them by themselves or in a combination meat dish.



### Kale and Collards—The Cabbage Kids!

Kale likes it KOLD! It does best as a fall crop, and its flavor is improved by light frosts. In contrast, collards like hot weather and are one of the few greens that do well all summer long.

For both kale and collards, set out transplants in the early spring. For a fall crop, plant seeds in mid July. Scatter the seeds close together; then thin plants to 8 inches apart in rows 18 inches apart. The little plants you thin out are really good to eat.



### Chard (Swiss)

Chard is really a foliage beet, with foliage that varies from pale green to ruby red in color. It will grow all summer if you keep cutting the outer leaves. (See page 2.) The stalks and thick ribs of the leaves are a lot like celery. Cook the stalks separately, just as you would celery. Try rolling the leaves with a ground meat filling and bake with your favorite mushroom or tomato sauce.



### Mustard Greens

Mustard grows fast—just 30 to 40 days from planting until picking. For the best flavor, harvest the leaves before they are fully grown. Mustard goes to seed when the days get warm and long, so plant it very early in the spring, or in August for a fall crop. The curly mustard varieties withstand frosts well and can be harvested late in the fall. Try mustard greens in a tasty Italian omelet or lightly sauteed in butter or bacon drippings.



### Spinach

Spinach is a little hard to grow. It goes to seed even faster than mustard when the weather gets warm. In hot weather, substitute chard in recipes that call for spinach. How about a spinach pie, creamed spinach, spinach soup or a cheesy spinach souffle? Spinach is certainly one of the most versatile greens.





Greens should be washed in cool running water to remove sand or soil. Shake them to remove excess water. Greens can be stored in a tightly covered container for one or two days in the refrigerator. But the sooner you use them, the better they are.



The trick to serving good, nutritious greens is to cook them quickly in as little water as possible, or use a steamer. Often the moisture that clings to the leaves after washing is all you need for cooking. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt to the water for each pound of greens. Cook leafy greens about 1 to 3 minutes—just until they wilt.



**Season with:** Allspice, Crisp, crumbled bacon and bacon drippings, Salt pork, Butter, Lemon, Onion, Nutmeg, Vinegar, Cheese sauce, Sesame oil.



KEYS  
TO  
SUCCESS

- Plant at the right time
- Make successive plantings of beets, turnips, mustard and spinach
- Use greens when fresh

*Other bulletins in this series provide additional information on vegetable gardening.*

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