

Lettuce



Sun: Plant in full sun (6 to 8 hours). Space 12 inches apart within rows or 5 to 6 plants per 2- to 3-gallon container. Plant January through February and from mid-August to early September.

Soil: Amend with organic matter to create a well-drained soil. Avoid planting in unamended sandy or heavy clay soils. If the soil test shows pH is below 6.2, apply lime in October or November as recommended.

For proper drainage in a container garden, use potting mix and ensure containers have drainage holes. Alternatively, consider using self-watering containers.

Water: Keep soil consistently moist but not saturated. Apply 1 to 2 inches of water each week. Avoid wetting leaves to prevent fungal disease. Mulch helps retain moisture.

Plant: Direct sow seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep. When plants are established, thin to 10 to 12 inches apart. Start seedlings 6 to 8 weeks before planting, and slowly harden off 1 week before moving to the garden. If buying transplants, choose those with healthy color and a stocky appearance. Avoid plants with flowers. Dig the planting hole as deep as the root ball. Firmly pat down the soil and water deeply.

Fertilize: In the absence of a soil test, apply an all-purpose fertilizer (8-8-8 or 10-10-10) at planting, according to label directions. Reapply beside plants, 4 to 6 inches from the stem (side-dress), 2 weeks after transplanting or 4 weeks after sowing seeds.

Insects/Diseases/Weeds: Scout plants frequently for insect/disease damage. Use insecticidal soap (for soft-bodied insects) or Bt dust or spray (for caterpillars, or worms). Spray fungicide regularly to suppress common fungal diseases. Always follow label instructions. Mulch inhibits weeds and diseases.

Harvest: Harvest at 45 to 85 days, when the outer leaves are 4 to 6 inches long, or heads are firm. Harvest time varies depending on the variety.

Other: Lettuce is an easy cool-season vegetable to grow; however, it is damaged in freezing temperatures. Lettuce can be planted on the shady side of taller crops to extend the season. Succession plantings every 3 to 4 weeks increase harvest.

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