

Latin Name/Genus: *Lactuca sativa*

Family: *Asteraceae*

Difficulty: Easy; well-suited to containers over 4" deep

Season: Cool season (spring/fall)

Exposure: Full-sun

Zone: Between Zones 2-11



Timing: Grows best in cool weather during spring and fall; either direct seed or start indoors and transplant. Sow in April, planting every 2-3 weeks for continual harvest. To extend fall harvests into winter, using a cloche or cold frame over mid-late August plantings is recommended.

Starting: Plant seeds on the surface and gently tamp them down. Seeds sprout in 2-15 days depending on soil temperature. Seeds don't sprout easily when the soil temperature is over 21°C (70°F) in July and August – avoid issues by sprouting them indoors in a cool area, or pre-sprout by sprinkling seeds on a damp paper towel, then place it in a plastic bag in the fridge for a couple days. One gram of seed sows at least 10m (35') of row so don't plant the whole package at once; in hot temperatures, lettuce goes to seed quickly, so be ready with your next round of seedlings. Direct seed 2.5 (1") apart in short rows 30-45cm (12-18") apart.

Days to Maturity: From transplant date.

Growing: Aim for a pH level of 6.0-7.0. Seedlings should be hardened off by reducing water and putting the plants outdoors 2-3 days prior to transplanting. Thin or transplant loose-leaf types to 20-25cm (8-10") apart. Heading types should stand 30cm (18") apart. Regular watering is essential to avoid bitter-tasting leaves.

Nutrient Preferences: Soil full of organic matter that drains well works best; add lime and compost approximately 3 weeks before planting (1 cup of complete organic fertilizer per 3m (10') of row will give adequate nutrition). Lettuce appreciates a balance of nitrogen [for leaf development], phosphorus, and potassium often, but also benefits from a little magnesium, calcium, iron, zinc, boron, and manganese.

Harvest: Pick individual leaves from the outside of the plant or wait and harvest full heads. Summer lettuce stays in prime eating condition only a short time, so harvest promptly and keep planting. In fall and winter the plants stay in good condition longer.

Companion Planting: Lettuce can be great companions for asparagus, beets, carrot, celery, chives, corn, cucumbers, dill, garlic, marigolds, onions, parsnips, peas, radish, spinach, strawberries, sunflowers, and tomatoes; not recommended with brassicas due to competition over nutrients.