



Lettuce Planting Guide

About Lettuce

Buttery soft or crisp with a crunch, homegrown lettuce is one of the garden's delicacies. From early spring straight into summertime, lettuce grows fast and flavorful. This is a fun crop to grow as you can harvest the leaves at any stage, from small tender greens to larger more mature leaves.

When to Plant

Lettuce is a cool weather crop and is best grown in spring and fall. The seeds germinate in temperatures as low as 40 degrees F but the ideal germination and growing temperature is between 60 and 65 degrees F. Wait until the ground thaws and is workable before sowing lettuce seeds, but you can begin 2-4 weeks before the last expected frost. Unlike other vegetables, lettuce seedlings can tolerate a light frost.

Where to Plant

Lettuce is a cool-season crop that does best in a sunny location in cooler temperatures. It grows in average soil with some compost and organic matter. If your goal is to have perfectly spaced lettuce heads dotting each row, consider starting your lettuce seeds in starter pots. Later, you can plant these starts at their correct spacing. If you plan to directly sow into your garden, be mindful to not overcrowd. Mix seeds with a bit of sand and distribute evenly by sprinkling through the planting site.

How to Plant

Dig about 4" deep, work in some compost and organic matter. Plant seeds about 1/8" deep by sprinkling them in and covering with a layer of soil. We recommend 4-6" between butter head varieties, 10-14" between loose-leaf cultivars and 12-16" between romaine and crisp head varieties.

Caring for Lettuce

Keep your lettuce well watered but not soggy. If your planting area gets full sun all day, you may want to protect the crop with some afternoon shade. In about 7-10 days, expect to see seedlings emerge. You can begin thinning them out. Lettuce roots are small and shallow, so take care as you pull out the seedlings, or better yet, use scissors or clippers to cut at soil level. Depending on the variety, lettuce will be ready to harvest within 40-75 days. Harvest in the morning when it is crisp. Loose-leaf varieties can be harvested by trimming outside leaves, moving from outside in. Heading types should be just firm at harvest; you can use a knife to cut heads below the lowest leaves, leaving the roots covered in soil behind.