

# How to grow spinach

## Spinach (*Spinacea oleracea*)

Family: Chenopodiaceae (Goosefoot)

Season: Cool

Ease of growing: Easy

Nutrient needs: Medium

Water needs: Medium

Common propagation: Seed

### Seed facts

Germination temperatures: 35°F to 75°F

Germination time: 5 to 22 days

Viability: 2 to 4 years

Direct sow: April to May (spring crop); July to early August (fall crop)

### Transplants facts

Weeks to grow transplants: 3 to 4

Start: March to April (spring); June to July (fall)

Plant out: 4 weeks before last frost

### Planning facts

Typical Spacing: 3" x 12"; 6" x 18"

Plants per square foot: 9 to 16

Succession sow: every 2 to 3 weeks

Days to harvest: 50 to 90 from seed; 30 to 70 from transplanting

## Preparation and planting

Spinach is an early spring or late fall crop. The heat of summer will cause it to bolt and flower. Usually the crop is started from seed. Spinach is slow to establish. Begin transplants in spring for an early start, or sow spinach as early as you can work the soil. You can sow a second crop about two weeks later and third crop in late July for use in the fall. Spinach grows well in a neutral to slightly alkaline soil.

## Care

Keep the plants weed-free. The shallow, fibrous roots do not compete well with weeds. They will benefit from light-colored, soil-cooling mulch. Keep the soil moist for the fastest growth.

## Major pests

**Insects:** Flea beetles, leafhoppers, leafminers, aphids, certain loopers.

**Diseases:** Damping-off, downy mildew, anthracnose, Cercospora leaf spot.

## Harvesting and storage

If you want to keep plants producing, harvest by pinching off the outer leaves when they're large enough to use. Do not harvest more than 50 percent of the leaves from a plant. To harvest the entire plant, cut at the base and remove the older leaves. At close to freezing temperature and high humidity, spinach can be stored for one to two weeks.

## Variety selection

Two basic types are available, smooth-leaf and savoy, which has crinkled leaves. Most gardeners prefer the smooth-leaf spinach because it is easier to clean.

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