



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Plant Your Thanksgiving Salads and Sides Now (September 23, 2023)

by Michelle Le Strange, UC Advisor, Emeriti

Tulare-Kings Counties home gardeners should take note. Now is the time to plant salad greens and winter vegetables. If you do, you'll have great salad and sides' fixings for your Thanksgiving dinner.



Salad greens are quick-growing crops and are easier to care for when planted in fall than in spring because the weather is more conducive to the growth of these cool-season crops and is easier on the gardener. Broccoli and cauliflower are also planted now but may take an extra 30 days to be ready. Important factors to vegetable growth are steady supplies of moisture and nutrients. Choose a nice sunny spot in the back or front yard and get it ready for your "kitchen garden." Make it large enough for your family but not so large that you won't have time to care for it. Start by incorporating a bunch of compost into the soil. Work it in with a spade or use a mini tiller.

While you're digging, it's also time to add a complete fertilizer (like 10-10-10 or 16-16-16) to supply the major growing nutrients of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. The organic matter will supply the other 14 nutrients needed for successful plant growth, including calcium, iron, magnesium, and zinc. Always mix the fertilizer into the top 2 to 3 inches of soil before planting, as seeds are sensitive and can get burned by any fertilizer that touches them.

Lettuce and salad greens don't need to be planted in rows, but they should be planted on raised garden beds. Seeds can be scattered over a wide surface. Don't worry if you plant too thickly; thinning will correct that. To give you an idea of how much seed you need, the average packet of lettuce seed will cover about 3 to 6 feet of a row. Firm the seeds into the ground so the seeds make good contact with the soil, then cover the seeds with about one-half inch of soil. Keep moisture constant, but make sure plants are not sitting in low spots. Thinning is usually done about 3 weeks after planting. Prevent weeds from taking over by picking them out as soon as they appear.

Lettuces and Spinach: Hundreds of varieties of lettuce are available to gardeners. They fall into 4 groups: crisphead, butterhead, romaine, and looseleaf. Salad greens include arugula, corn salad (also called lamb's lettuce or mache), endives, escarole, garden cress, watercress, and spinach.

- Arugula is a mounding, leafy plant with a peppery-nutty flavor that adds an interesting taste to salads. Old leaves are bitter, so harvest frequently to encourage the growth of new leaves.
- Corn salad is an open-mounded salad plant that produces a rosette of tender, hairy leaves and is often mixed with other salad greens for diversity.
- Garden cress has dark green leaves with a tangy, peppery flavor. Watercress thrives as an aquatic plant but will also do well in the ground as long as the soil is kept very moist.
- Endive is a long-growing, narrow-leaved plant and is very similar to escarole, which is taller with broader leaves.

Cabbage Family Greens:

Consider adding greens to soups, stews, and pot pies for an additional zesty flavor.

- Chard – Just a couple of chard plants go a long way in the garden, but they offer a lot of flavor. Ruby chard is characterized by red veins and dark green leaves.
- Collards - The mild cabbage taste and long tradition of collard greens at mealtime have special significance for Southern gardeners. The 4-5 inch seedlings resemble cabbage plants, but they'll never "head up" in the garden like cabbage. Like other greens, you can start harvesting collards as soon as some of the leaves make enough for a meal. If you harvest only the bottom leaves of the plant, the center bud will continue to push out new leaves.
- Kale – It's sometimes called the "Wonder Crop" because its vitamin A and C content is so high. Italian heirloom kale varieties are quite popular right now with gourmet chefs. The leaves are tender and sweet tasting when harvested at the right time in the fall. The leaves develop a tanginess that is hard to match. Flowering kale has curly green, maroon, and white leaves that are beautiful in the grey of winter.



- Mustard - Garden mustard is leafy, curly, green, and very nutritious. Green Wave and Tendergreen varieties give excellent results.

The Tulare-Kings Co. Master Gardeners have a [Vegetable Planting Guide for San Joaquin Valley Gardens](https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/files/84716.pdf). Download it here: https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/files/84716.pdf

Plant a variety of colors, styles, and shapes of winter vegetables, and your winter meals will never be dull.

Are you interested in becoming a Master Gardener? Our next class runs January 26 through May 24, 2024. We will be holding a mandatory orientation on Fri., October 13 @ 1 pm. Register online: https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/ -- select "Become a Master Gardener".

Please call our office with any questions (559) 684-3300

The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions in person:

September 28 – Hanford Farmer's Market, 5:30 – 9 pm, 219 W. Lacey, Hanford

September 30 – Visalia Farmer's Market 8 – 11 am, NEW LOCATION Visalia Courthouse Parking lot

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m

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