



Growing Microgreens Indoors

Add a flavor treat to your salads and sandwiches right from your kitchen windowsill.

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For information on the Yakima county Master Gardener Program:

<https://extension.wsu.edu/yakima/home-garden/>



Have you looked at those containers of microgreens for sale in nearly all grocery stores? Microgreens have become very popular, but they are not cheap to purchase. The good news is you can easily grow your own indoors on a windowsill, or under lights and have a quick harvest of healthy greens to enjoy on sandwiches, in salads or add at the last minute to stir-fries (microgreens are fragile and will not stand up to lengthy cooking).

Microgreens are basically a mix of lettuces, salad greens and herbs that are harvested while quite young and tender – generally about one inch tall. Microgreens are smaller and younger than baby greens, which

tend to be harvested later when the plants have grown to three inches tall or more.

To grow your microgreens, you can start with pre-packaged seeds, microgreen seed mixes, or one of the many mesclun mixes available. A few popular varieties of seeds grown as microgreens include: mustard, kale, endive, arugula, basil, beet greens, chicory, pak choi, spinach, tatsoi, radish greens, watercress, mizuna, mache (corn salad), cabbage, swiss chard, turnip greens and lettuces.

When planting your microgreens, you might mix different seeds in one container or plant only one kind of seed per container – the choice is yours. Once you have chosen your seeds you should choose a container deep enough to hold two to three inches of soil and as large in diameter as you want. You can repurpose those clear or translucent plastic clamshells used for restaurant take-out or as containers for produce to create your “microgreen container garden”.

Punch several drainage holes in the bottom of the container with an awl or make slits with scissors or a sharp knife. Place the container on a tray, fill it with a good-quality potting soil mix and smooth the soil. Moisten the soil lightly and scatter the seeds so they are about one-eighth to one-quarter inch apart. Barely cover the seeds with soil and press in gently so they make good contact with the damp soil (a piece of cardboard cut slightly smaller than the size of the container makes a good “press”). Water with a gentle stream or spray to keep the soil moist, place the trays in a warm spot where they will get at least four hours of sunlight and you should see germination within several days. It’s important that the soil not dry out so keep your containers moist by misting or using a gentle spray.

A south-facing window is best, but an eastern or western facing one will do if you have supplemental light. If your plants are not located where they get at least four hours of direct sunlight per day you should supplement the natural light with plant lights or full-spectrum fluorescent lights. There are also some long-lasting LED

plant lights available that provide the blue and red spectrums required by the plants. You should also take care not to place the containers too close to the window where the plants might be subjected to cold drafts. Also, they should not be placed too close to a heat source as they dry out easily.

To harvest your microgreens, watch for them to develop the first set of “true leaves” (the first leaves are “seed leaves” and do not look anything like the actual leaves of the plant). The seed leaves will wither, and the true

leaves should appear about 10 to 14 days after planting – this is the time to start harvesting your crop. Harvest by snipping the plants off at the soil level. Do not let them get larger than one to two inches or they



won't be tender. You can plant a second crop after harvest by simply scattering fresh seeds and covering them with a light dusting of soil. It's not necessary to remove the old roots as they will add organic matter to the soil.

As you can see, microgreens are simple to grow and provide you with a lot of harvest for not much work. You might want to experiment with different seed mixes and maybe try some of the spicy flavors such as peppergrass cress, daikon radish or ‘Giant Red’ mustard as well as the milder tatsoi, mizuna, mache, and lettuces. An added bonus of the various microgreens is the touch of color they add

to your home during the long winter! And of course, gardeners get to utilize that 'green thumb' when they can't get outside to garden.