

APRIL 2015



EPIC WELLNEWS

HOW TO GROW MICROGREENS FOR FOOD AND FUN

Microgreens are the perfect crop to bring nature into your home – and with tasty, nutritious results. An indoor microgreen garden can be inexpensive and fun, and watching the young plants grow is satisfying and relaxing. Microgreens have a short shelf life, so raising them yourself and harvesting as needed gives you the best access to these wonderful plants.

Microgreens are very young vegetable and herb plants, usually an inch or two high and with one or two sets of leaves. Many kinds of food plants, including all lettuces, kale, chard, spinach, celery, cabbage, radish, parsley, and cilantro, can be used for microgreens. The baby plants taste quite different from the mature versions you are used to enjoying. Microgreens can be sweet or spicy, and appeal with various colors and textures.

Depending on the seeds you select, tiny plants often push out of the soil after only a couple days of watering. You generally have to wait only a week or two from the time the seed first starts to grow until the time your crop is ready to eat.

You can raise these young plants to incorporate into many recipes. For example, sprinkle some on soups, salads, cooked grains, sandwiches, wraps, and beans. Microgreens add elegance and color, as well as nutrition, texture, and flavor, to even simple dishes.

These young plants add variety and interest to your diet, and make it simple and inexpensive to increase your consumption of fresh produce at any time of year.

WHAT'S BETTER YET?

Researchers have found that microgreens are crammed with nutrients. One study looked at four groups of vitamins and other nutrients, including vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K, and beta carotene, in 25 varieties of microgreens. Researchers found that the microgreens have four to six times more nutrients than the mature leaves of the same plant did for an equivalent weight of food. So even a sprinkling of microgreens on your food will provide a significant nutrient punch.

Microgreens should not be confused with sprouts, which are germinated in water just long enough to grow roots, a stem, and underdeveloped leaves. In contrast, microgreens have developed in soil and sun, so have been able to manufacture additional nutrients that were not in the original seed.

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WONDERING WHERE TO GET STARTED?

Here is one approach to raising microgreens indoors with few supplies and minimal effort. You start with the plastic clamshell containers that small fruits and vegetables (such as strawberries, blueberries, cherry tomatoes, and salad greens) often come packaged in. These are free, assuming you are going to buy the food anyway. You also need potting soil, a spray bottle, seeds, and possibly a trowel. Twenty dollars should get you started and keep you going a long time.

Basically, you use the plastic clamshells for planting, keeping the seeds moist and fast-growing by placing the clamshells in a small amount of water (which can be absorbed by soil through the holes in clamshells) and misting them with water from the top as well.

Step-by-step, no-cost, illustrated instructions on how to grow microgreens indoors with this method can be found at microgreengarden.com. Or try your own web search. Just remember to have fun and eat your greens!

One last thing to remember and consider: microgreens are very delicate plants that have high water content. For this reason, cooking the microgreens isn't recommended. Use them instead as a final garnish that brings an added nutrient and flavor-filled touch!