

GROWING GUIDE FOR SPINACH

Binomial Name:	Spinacia
Varieties:	Bloomsdale Long Standing, Giant Noble, New Zealand
Start:	Seeds or seedlings
Germination:	6 - 10 days, 5°C to 24°C
Seed Life (viability):	2 years
Soil:	Well drained
Sunlight:	Full sun, part shade
Sow Seeds:	3 cm apart
Transplant Seedlings:	10 - 15 cm apart
Ave. Days to Harvest:	50 to 60
Good Companions:	Beans, beetroot, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, kohlrabi, potato, radish, rhubarb, strawberry, tomato
Bad Companions:	

Sowing & Planting:

This easy-to-grow, nutritious, cool-season crop is among the first greens ready to harvest. But plant it early because it's quick to turn bitter and bolt (go to seed) as the weather warms and the days lengthen. The dark green colour and handsome texture of savoyed varieties are great for edible landscaping.

Sow seed 1cm deep, 3cm apart in rows 30 to 45cm apart (or broadcast seed across a wider area). Thin to 10 - 15cm spacing's. Closer spacing's can stress the plants and cause them to go to bolt sooner. Early planting is critical as dry soil, heat and lengthening days also encourage bolting. Later plantings will benefit from some light shade.

Follow early plantings with warm-season crops such as tomatoes or beans. Make succession plantings every week or two until the average last frost date. Sow again in mid- to late summer (under shade) for an autumn harvest. Seeds do not germinate well in warm soil so increase seeding rate to compensate. Or pre-germinate seeds by placing them between sheets of moist paper towel in a plastic bag and refrigerating until they sprout. Spinach seedlings are difficult to transplant.

Growing:

Spinach is shallow-rooted and requires consistent moisture to prevent bolting. Water regularly to keep the soil moist. Mulch well after the plants are established to maintain moisture and to suppress weeds. Use floating row covers to prevent insect damage. Do not over fertilize with nitrogen. Only apply supplemental fertilizer if leaves are pale green. Add lime to make sure pH is at least 6.0. You should suspect that your soil is too acid if germination is poor and leaf tips and margins are yellow or brown.

Harvesting:

Spinach is ready for use as soon as it is an edible size and it must be harvested before there is extensive yellowing, breakage and other leaf deterioration or the development of seed-

stalks. Spinach for market is usually cut below the crown with a knife, taking care to keep the plants clean and to prevent undue breakage or bruising of the leaves. Spinach should be sorted to remove all yellow or damaged leaves before packing into baskets. If spinach is slightly wilted when packed, it will be less subject to breakage.

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