

In the Garden: Growing Your Own Lettuce



Reuters

Lettuce at a supermarket in Switzerland. Why buy when you could grow it yourself?

This is the VOA Special English Agriculture Report.

MIRANDA (TV's "Sex and the City"): "I'll start with a salad with extra blue-cheese dressing, thank you."

Many people have lettuce in a salad at the beginning of a meal. The ancient Egyptians and Romans had it at the end. Either way, gardening experts say lettuce is one of the easiest vegetables to grow in a garden.

There are hundreds of kinds of head and leaf lettuces besides the most popular choices, like iceberg, Boston, bibb and romaine. The best time to plant the seeds is during cool weather. Gardening advisers at the University of Illinois Extension say the best planting temperature is fifteen degrees Celsius.

You can use a seed tray to start the seeds indoors. The container should be deep enough to hold at least three centimeters of soil. Leave about one centimeter of space between the soil and the top of the container. The container should have holes in the bottom so extra water can flow out.

Cover the seeds lightly with soil. If the soil is not already a little wet, give it some water, but not too much. Too much water could drown the seeds.

Next, cover the seed tray with paper. Remove the paper when the seedlings are tall enough to touch it. You can transplant the seedlings into the garden when they are about two to three centimeters tall. Do this when the weather is not too hot and not too cold.

Take out as much of the soil as you can with the seedlings. Plant them in the ground in a hole that is bigger than the lettuce roots. Keep the plants watered, but not too heavily.

Planting seeds every week or two will provide a continuous supply of lettuce to harvest.

Harvest leaf lettuces when the leaves are big enough to eat. Pull the leaves from the outside of the plant so the inner leaves will keep growing. Or cut off the whole plant but leave about two or three centimeters so it will regrow. Cut off head lettuces at ground level.

Lettuce is best when served fresh. The remainder should be stored in a refrigerator in a plastic bag.

And that's the VOA Special English Agriculture Report, written by Jerilyn Watson. Do you grow lettuce or other greens in your garden? Share your gardening stories at voaspecialenglish.com, where people can read, listen and learn English and much more. You can also find us at the VOA Learning English page on Facebook and in the podcasts section on iTunes. I'm Karen Leggett.