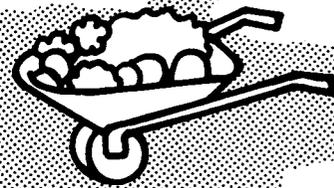
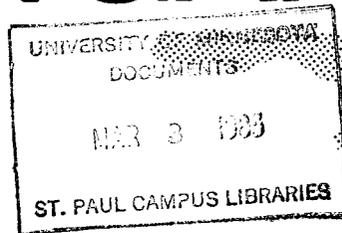


AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE—UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# YARD'N'GARDEN

## Growing Salad Vegetable Crops

FACT SHEET 109  
C. GUSTAV HARD



Lettuce, endive, celery, and parsley are the most popular salad vegetables. There are three types of lettuce: looseleaf, head or semi-head, and upright. Leaf lettuce grows quickly and is the easiest type of lettuce to grow. Endive is available in finely curled and broad-leaved varieties. The broad-leaved variety is often called escarole. Celery is not usually grown in the home garden. It requires a long growing season, and it does not grow well in hot, dry summer weather. Parsley is used for garnishing and flavoring. A few plants will produce enough for the average family.

The salad crops provide vitamins as well as needed bulk. They are usually eaten without cooking.

### Preparing the Soil and Fertilizing

Proper soil preparation is very important for success with the salad crops. They have small root systems and are poor foragers, so there needs to be a good supply of nutrients in the surface soil. The soil should be well drained and moisture retentive. Deeply plow or till the soil, then pulverize and smooth the surface. Incorporate well-rooted manure, other organic matter, compost, and a complete fertilizer such as a 10-10-10, at the rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet into the soil before planting. In the midseason you should apply a side dressing of the same fertilizer at a rate of 1 pound for each 25 feet of row. Do not use a combination of fertilizer and herbicide on vegetables. They contain weed killers that will kill vegetable plants.

The optimum pH range for salad crops is between 5.5 and 6.5. Liming will raise the pH of acid soils. Use a soil test to determine if any special fertilization or liming is required.

### Planting and Transplanting

Seed leaf lettuce directly in the garden April 20 for a spring crop, and again August 1 for a fall crop. Space plants 2 inches apart. Head lettuce is more difficult to grow and is not recommended for inexperienced gardeners. For best results, start seeds indoors April 1 and transplant to the garden May 10. Space head lettuce 10 inches apart.

Seed endive directly in the garden April 20 for a spring crop, and again July 1 for a fall crop. Space plants 10 inches apart. Blanching endive will produce white leaves in the heart of the plant and prevent bitterness. To blanch a plant, tie the

outer leaves up around the heart of the plant. Blanching takes about two weeks.

Celery requires a very long growing season and must be started indoors. Start seeds February 1 and transplant to the garden May 10. Space plants 15 inches apart.

Thinly seed parsley directly in the garden May 10. After growth begins, thin so the plants are 4 to 6 inches apart. Plants may be started indoors.

Note: Planting dates given are for the Minneapolis - St. Paul area. Plant one week earlier or later for each 100 miles south or north.

### Watering

Watering is essential to successfully grow the salad crop. Their small, shallow root system cannot tolerate dry weather. They need at least 1 inch of water from rainfall or irrigation each week during the growing season. Always soak the soil thoroughly when watering. There is little or no value in a light watering that only wets the surface of the soil. Lettuce, endive, and celery will be crisper if they are watered several days prior to harvesting. The leaves of lettuce and endive will be tough and the edges will turn brown if they do not receive enough watering.

### Controlling Weeds

The salad crops are slow growing and they have small root systems, so they cannot successfully compete with weeds. Frequent, shallow cultivation will control the weeds and keep the surface of the soil loose. The roots of the salad crops are very close to the surface, so it is important to not cultivate too deeply. Cultivate just deeply enough to cut the weeds off below the soil surface. Do not overcultivate. Unnecessary cultivation may dry out the surface of the soil.

### Harvesting

Leaf lettuce can be harvested as soon as the leaves become large enough to use. You can remove the whole plant by cutting it off at or just below the surface of the soil. However, by removing only the outer leaves each time, the plant will continue to produce for a long time. Head lettuce can be harvested before the head is well formed. Harvest by cutting the head off at or just below the surface of the soil. For best quality, lettuce should be

harvested before the hot, dry weather causes it to become bitter.

Harvest endive when the plant reaches a useable size and after it has been blanched. To harvest, cut the plant off at or just below the surface of the soil.

Harvest celery as soon as it reaches a useable size. It does not have to be full grown. To harvest, cut the plant off below the surface of the soil. Celery harvested in hot, dry weather may be tough, stringy, and bitter.

To harvest parsley, pick only a few leaves from a plant at a time. Plants will produce for several weeks. In late fall you can dig up parsley plants and bring them indoors to produce fresh parsley during the winter.

### Problems

Dwarfed, yellow plants may be caused by yellows disease and spread by leafhoppers. Control by controlling leafhoppers. Do not apply poisonous insecticides to plant parts that are to be eaten.

Holes in the leaves are caused by snails and slugs. Wet weather usually worsens the condition.

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