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Growing bibb lettuce in containers

Nothing makes it easier to get hooked on gardening than planting a successful crop of fruits and vegetables. While there are plenty of beginner-friendly options, lettuce and other leafy greens are near the top of the list. They're ultra-simple to grow and are a cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle. Keep reading to learn how to grow lettuce in your garden, whether it's big or small, outdoors or indoors. We'll also talk about the different kinds of leafy greens you can plant and offer simple tips on creating a sustainable home garden. Getting to Know Lettuce Lettuce and other leafy greens are ideal for any home garden, regardless of size. Whether you have an expansive outdoor space or just a little bit of room on a kitchen countertop, you can learn how to grow lettuce indoors and out. Better still, there are several types of lettuce you can grow, from peppery arugula to delicate bibb lettuce. When you learn how to grow lettuce, you can skip buying salad greens at the grocery store and discover the joy of growing your own food at home. Need some ideas for what to plant? Here's a list of our favorite lettuce varieties to get you started: Romaine Lettuce: Romaine is popular in restaurants, and for a good reason. It makes a delightful salad and doubles as a wrap for other foods. Watercress: Related to kale and cabbage, watercress is a spicy green that grows wild in certain regions. Packed with nutrients, it makes a tasty addition to any salad mix. Butterhead Lettuce: Butterhead is a loose-leaf lettuce (meaning it forms loose heads and not compact ones). You might see this variety of lettuce called buttercrunch or bibb lettuce. It can be more delicious (sweeter!) when you grow it yourself, plus you can keep a little more cash in your wallet since it's more expensive than other types at the supermarket. Iceberg Lettuce: Also called crisphead lettuce, iceberg grows well in cooler temperatures and makes for a crunchy and delicious meal. (Hello, wedge salad!) Arugula: Another peppery green, arugula grows well in winter gardens and tastes great in dishes other than salad. Add it to your pasta or use it to top a pizza. How To Grow Lettuce: From Seed to Harvest All it takes to have a garden full of thriving lettuce plants is a bit of preparation and planning so you can get it off to the right start. Here are a few things to be aware of before you grab your gardening gloves. Create the Right Planting and Soil Conditions We can't emphasize how vital soil quality is to a healthy and successful garden. For this reason, spend some time preparing your garden soil conditions. A quality potting mix is an excellent place to start. The right potting soil will be chock-full of organic matter like kelp and alfalfa meals, bat guano and worm castings, and beneficial microbes and bacteria. All of these ingredients will nurture your lettuce seeds and their root system once they mature, giving them everything they need to thrive. Greens have a long growing season, so with careful planning, you can expect months of leafy greens at your dinner table. But depending on where you live, you may want to give your lettuce the summer off. Hot weather can make leaves bitter, so try harvesting before temperatures climb. Also, once your lettuce plants start bolting (growing flower stalks), you'll know it's time to hit pause on the season until the weather cools down. If you decide to try summer lettuce growing, try planting in partial shade rather than full sun. That way, your plants and soil can stay cooler and minimize the bitterness that can come with summer lettuce gardens. Psst: For an extra boost of growing power, consider adding organic fertilizer to your garden throughout the season. It can help replace missing nutrients, improve soil conditions, and overall plant growth. Determine the Best Time to Grow Your Lettuce Plants Feel free to sow seeds in early spring — a few weeks before the last frost date will work. If you're not sure when that is, use our handy grow calendar. Be mindful of spacing and look on your seed packets for information — the distance between seeds will depend on which type of lettuce you're planting. Germination is more successful in cool temperatures. Keep your soil moist with consistent watering too. You could also start your plants indoors and transplant your lettuce seedlings outdoors later in the season. If things get chilly, think about using row covers or a cold frame to protect your plants. Both can shield them from the elements until your plants are stronger. Just be sure and pull off any covers so your plants can get as much sunshine as possible during the day. To keep your lettuce garden growing year-round, think about a cool-weather garden. Several types of leafy greens, such as kale and Swiss chard, benefit from colder temperatures. Another reason to plant lettuce when the weather turns? A winter vegetable garden is often easier to maintain with fewer weeds and pests. Psst: Try planting seeds every two weeks to make sure your garden will be able to supply you and your family with lettuce all year long. And don't forget to harvest the outer leaves so the rest of the plant can continue to grow. Watch Out for Pests, Disease, and Weeds You won't be the only one who's excited to work on your lettuce. Aphids and snails will be all too eager to chow down. Turn to natural pest control to keep bugs in check and your lettuce safe and pesticide-free. Ladybugs love to feast on aphids and can lend a hand in keeping their population down. Visit your local Walmart Garden Center or Home Depot Garden Center to look for containers of ladybugs you can introduce into your yard. Deterring snails is simple too. A sprinkling of diatomaceous earth around your garden will put a stop to them. Just be sure to reapply after watering. Managing weeds can feel like a chore, but adding something simple like mulch can go a long way in keeping pests from taking over your garden. An even better way to minimize weeds in your lettuce garden is to plant your greens in garden beds. On top of making weed control more manageable, raised beds offer better soil drainage than a typical garden setup and help keep insects and critters away. Psst: For an easy way to get started, check out Back to the Root's Fabric Raised Garden Bed. Made of high-quality material that will last from one season to the next, this fabric garden bed is portable and easy to set up. Simply unfold, fill with soil, and add your plants. Done and done! Growing Lettuce Indoors Live in an urban environment or short on space? No problem. A hydroponic gardening system is perfect when you only have space near a windowsill or on a corner of the kitchen counter. These gardening systems are low-maintenance, making them a great fit for people who are busy and on the go. If you can't place your hydroponic system near a window, invest in a grow light. These lights can ensure your plants will flourish indoors. Psst: Take a peek at our guide to hydroponic systems to learn how to grow lettuce and other fruits and vegetables indoors. Nourish Your Family With Homegrown Lettuce Lettuce is a fun and easy vegetable to plant in your garden. It's perfect for beginners or those who'd like a break from more demanding garden projects. Growing your own food is a fantastic way to make sticking to a healthy lifestyle even easier and save you money. Keep learning more about how to create the perfect garden on our Back to the Roots blog. L.M.Reid is a gardener with lots of experience. This writer has published many gardening articles so you can learn how to grow many plants.How to grow lettuce from seeds in containers and pots in the backyardL.M.ReidHow to Grow Lettuce in ContainersPlanting, growing and harvesting different varieties of lettuce plants is easy and great fun.I show youHow much sun and water the lettuce plant needs to grow. How many lettuce seeds do you plant in one hole? How long does it take for lettuce seeds to germinate? If you have a small garden or only a yard or patio then you can successfully plant lettuce seeds in containers or pots for a great harvest.Which Variety of Lettuce to GrowThere are numerous varieties of lettuce that can be grown very successfully. They all have different tastes and textures. If you are not sure which lettuces to grow you can buy a mixed seed packet and see which ones you prefer. Lettuce is prone to be eaten and damaged by slugs and other garden pests. There are a few simple ways to protect your plants which I will explain here.When to Sow The SeedsPlant out lettuce seeds in early spring once the frosts have gone. That is March or April here in Ireland. Lettuce grows best in sheltered areas with a few hours of direct sunlight.Which Pots and Containers to UsePlastic pots or large garden bags are best. They do not have to be too deep but a wider surface allows you to grow more lettuce plants. Do not use clay pots because there is always the danger of the soil drying out in summer. All containers used must have proper drainage to avoid water logging the plants.Learn how to grow young lettuce plants in a containerL.M.ReidPlanting Lettuce SeedsYou can plant lettuce seeds directly into your containers or pots or put them into seed trays. I prefer to plant them in seedling trays and then transplanting them into the containers. This way I have more control over how the lettuce grows.How to Plant Into TraysAdd fresh compost into the trays and water well. Take out a few seeds and put into the palm of your hand. Using your other hand pinch out a few seeds and sprinkle onto the soil. If the tray has compartments put four into each corner. If the tray is open then make a line down the soil before you place the seeds into it. Lettuce seeds are very small so you are bound to get a few bunched together. Move them around with a thin stick if possible but if not you can thin them out later. How to grow lettuce seeds in the gardenL.M.ReidGermination Cover the seeds very lightly with some compost. Water with a watering can with the spray attachment. Place the trays in a sheltered but sunny position either in the garden or on your patio. Do not let the seed tray dry out but at the same time do not over water. It will take about two weeks for the seeds to germinate. Once you see that they have four leaves and are about two to three inches high then it is time to transplant them into the containers. TransplantingMake sure whatever pot you are using to grow the lettuce has plenty of drainage. Prepare the containers by filling with new compost and water well. Soil from the garden or compost used last year is not suitable. Make small holes in the soil where you want to put the plants. For the varieties that grow a heart you will need to leave more space between plants, around eight inches. For the varieties where there are only leaves you can space them closer together. Gently pick out the plants by the roots from the seed trays by using a thin stick Put into the container and firm the soil around the plants. Give a very light sprinkle of water. Add mulch to the soil. This will cut down on weeds and help keep in the moisture. How To Grow LettuceL.M.ReidProtection How to protect lettuce plants in pots and containers. By adding a mulch of straw or bark you are giving the plants the ideal conditions for healthy growth. You also need to protect them from slugs, snails and birds.Collect the egg shells from your kitchen into a small box. When you have a few crush them into tiny pieces. Place them around the surface of the container making sure to add more around the base of the plants. The sharpness of the shells will stop slugs, snails and birds from eating your lettuce.plants They do not like the sharp surface so will avoid it. Directly Into ContainersPrepare the container as per directions set out above. Scatter the seeds as thinly as possible onto the soil. Once the seedlings have germinated and are around two to three inches high with four leaves then it is time to thin them out. Pick the best looking plants to keep and gently pick out the smaller weaker plants with a thin stick. You can transplant these into another pot if you have not damaged them. Continue to look after the plants as set out above. How to Grow Lettuce and Scallions L.M.ReidWhen to Harvest For the leaf lettuce it can be picked at around twenty five days after planting. Earlier if you like smaller leaves. Always pick from the outer side of the plant as this will allow the lettuce to produce more leaves. I only pick what I am using that day as that way you can eat your lettuce at its freshest. The leaf lettuce varieties grow for about five to six weeks after planting. Once they have matured the whole plant should be cut with a knife. Gather the leaves in one hand and cut at the bottom leaving the roots still in the soil. For all heart lettuce varieties it take about six to seven weeks for the plants to mature. You can pick some of the outer leaves from these too while it is maturing. Cut the head lettuce at the base of the plant with a sharp knife. This way you are not disturbing other plants in the container. You can remove the remainder of the roots when all the lettuce and other vegetables have been harvested. Growing Lettuce As you can see from these instructions once you know the few rules of growing lettuce it is easy enough. You can have a steady supply of home grown lettuce in your garden or on your patio. You will be able to enjoy eating the lettuce in salads, sandwiches and as side dishes with meals. Leaf Lettuce grown in my gardenL.M.ReidHow to Grow Other Vegetables and FruitCheck out my other guides on how to grow:This content is accurate and true to the best of the author's knowledge and is not meant to substitute for formal and individualized advice from a qualified professional.Questions & AnswersQuestion: My lettuce has brown leaves with brown edges. What is the cause of this?Answer: There are two reasons why your lettuce leaves have turned brown: 1. This is a sign that the roots have dried out. Cut off the brown leaves and make sure to water the plant's roots regularly. 2. The lettuce plants are too close together, and the leaves are turning brown because they do not have enough space to grow properly. CommentsL. M Reid (author) from Ireland on October 03, 2020:Hello Lorna. Yes planting and growing vegetables is a learning curve but once you have done it correctly you will be able to grow lettuce every year.Lorna duldulao on June 12, 2020:I have learned a lot in planting vegetables,i have done in wrong method,now after knowing this, i have to correct the proper way of planting and caring of my veg plant.thanks.L M Reid (author) from Ireland on May 11, 2020:Hello Rose, each lettuce plant needs to be separated and put into either a container or straight into your garden. Gently prick out each one from the soil by using a small round stick. When you lift them out you will see the small roots. Each one that hasa root attached is a separate lettuce plant.Rose Slawich on May 04, 2020:Started lettuce in cups , wondering how to transplant them into garden outside.Do each little stem need to be separatedL. M Reid (author) from Ireland on December 14, 2017:Hello Susan, Lettuce is very easy to grow so is a good vegetable to start with. Good luckSusan Zutautas from Ontario, Canada on November 27, 2017:I'm not much of a gardener but I think you may have inspired me to try lettuce. Will let you know how it goes.L M Reid (author) from Ireland on June 28, 2014:Growing lettuce is well worth the effort because I can enjoy fresh produce all summer. Thank you gardener den for taking the time to leave a commentDennis Hoyman from Southwestern, Pennsylvania on June 16, 2014:Viking305Great hub on growing lettuce in containers. Keep up the good work! Gardener DenL. M Reid (author) from Ireland on March 26, 2014:Lettuce, scallions and peppers are great vegetables to grow in containers on a patio or balcony. Have ago hellowictoria because they are easy ones to grow and can all be picked as you need them for a fresh salad.Cherry tomatoes are good for patios too. I grew one plant of the hanging variety in a pot that I hung on the wall and it produced lots of tomatoes.BNadyn if you have the space and the time growing vegetables really is worth it. Even though it can be hard work at times when you see the vegetables growing and then taste them you will look forward to developing your vegetable garden every yearBernadyn from Jacksonville, Florida on March 25, 2014:Easy to follow tutorial here, nice job! I have never grown any of my own vegetables but would like to start soon. I like the idea of fresh vegetables to eat every day. Great photos, too.ToriM from Atlanta on March 24, 2014:I've been looking to grow some different food variety plants on my patio. I don't know why I've never thought of lettuce. I'll definitely be doing this soon with the help of your tutorial! Thanks for posting!!

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