

# Spinach and other greens

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Greens include leafy green vegetables like spinach, Swiss chard, kale, and spring mix (leaf lettuces). Most greens are cool-season crops and must be grown in the early spring or fall in Texas. Some greens—especially kale—will withstand temperatures below freezing and can be grown all winter in many areas.

## 🌱 Grow it

### Varieties

- Seed sold at local nurseries will typically do well. If possible, search for Bright Lights chard, Lacinato kale, romaine lettuce (red and green), and savoy spinach.

### Soil Preparation

- Incorporate compost 6 to 8 inches deep along with 1 cup of 15-5-10 per 10 feet of row.

### Planting

- It is best to plant several short rows 10 to 14 days apart instead of planting all at once. This is called succession planting. It evenly distributes your harvest rather than having all the harvest at once.
- Make the planting hole about ½ inch deep and 1½ to 2 feet apart down the bed.
- Plant seeds about 1 inch apart down the row and cover with loose soil or compost.
- Greens can also be planted in one big block rather than in rows by spreading seed on a bed 18 to 20 inches wide and covering them with soil.
- This method allows more plants to be grown per foot of row but makes weed control harder because they must be pulled by hand.

### Fertilizing

- About 30 days after the plants come up, scatter 1 teaspoon of 15-5-10 fertilizer or ¼ to ½ cup of organic fertilizer beside the plants for every 10 feet of row and water thoroughly.

### Watering

- Water plants thoroughly each week. Do not allow the plants to wilt.

### Care During the Season

- Hand pull weeds close to the crop.
- After the plants come up and become crowded, begin thinning the row.
- Do not throw away thinned plants, as they make excellent tender greens.

### Insects and Diseases

- Harvest when leaves are still very young to avoid pest issues.
- Cucumber beetles generally cause holes in leaves.

### Harvesting

- Harvest spinach when plants are 6 to 8 inches tall. Clip the leaves just above the crown—about 1 to 2 inches above ground level.
- Continue to water and fertilize lightly and the plants will continue growing.
- Plants will stop producing in hot weather. Pull up the entire plant in the spring.
- Harvest lower leaves of chard and kale as the leaves grow. These plants also will continue growing.



Sun:  
Full-  
partial  
shade



Soil:  
Well-  
drained



Planting:  
Cool



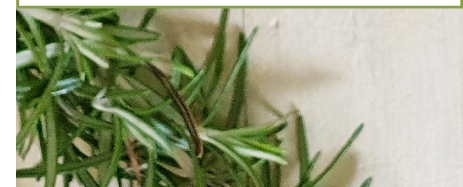
Harvest:  
Fall-Early  
Spring



Life Cycle:  
Annual



Container  
Friendly



## Buy it

- Choose fresh, crisp, green bunches with no evidence of insect damage.

## Use it

### Spinach Quesadillas

Course: Main Dish  
Serves: 4

#### Ingredients:

- 1½ pound fresh spinach
- 1 tsp canola oil
- 8 corn tortillas, 6 or 7 inch
- ¼ cup salsa, drained
- ¾ cup reduced-fat shredded Monterey Jack cheese

#### Instructions:

Place spinach in a colander in the sink and run water over the greens. Drain and pat dry.

Chop the washed spinach.

Add vegetable oil to the skillet and sauté the fresh spinach quickly over medium heat until soft.

Place 4 tortillas on a work surface.

Spread half of the ¾ cup cheese evenly on each tortilla.

Top the cheese with 1 tablespoon of salsa, followed by ¼ cup of cooked spinach.

Evenly spread the remaining cheese on top of the spinach on each tortilla.

Top it with the remaining tortillas and press firmly.

Cook each quesadilla in the skillet over medium heat until the cheese melts and the tortillas are golden brown—about 3 minutes per side.



## Store it

- Loosely wrap spinach in a damp paper towel.
- Refrigerate in a plastic bag for use within 3 to 5 days.
- For canning and preservation instructions, visit [nchfp.uga.edu](http://nchfp.uga.edu).

### Spinach Pasta Toss

Course: Main Dish  
Serves: 6

#### Ingredients:

- 1 (15-oz) can Italian-style diced tomatoes un-drained (preferably low-sodium)
- 2 cups whole wheat penne pasta, dry
- 1 cup water
- 3 cups baby spinach leaves
- 1 cup reduced-fat Italian-style shredded cheese

#### Instructions:

Bring tomatoes, pasta, and water to a boil in a large saucepan. Stir.

Cover. Simmer on medium to low heat for 10 minutes or until the pasta is tender.

Add half of spinach and simmer covered for 2 minutes or until wilted. Stir.

Repeat until all remaining spinach is added.

Serve topped with cheese.

For a spicier dish, add ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes with the tomatoes.

## Learn about it

- First cultivated over 2,000 years ago in Iran, by 1806 spinach became a popular vegetable in America.
- Spinach is often eaten raw in salads or as a cooked green, similar to turnip greens and collard greens.
- It is free of fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
- Spinach is a low-calorie food and a recommended source of fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, folic acid, and magnesium.

*Information gathered by Aggie Horticulture*

**Spinach**  
was popularized in the  
U.S. thanks to Popeye the  
Sailorman in the 1920s.

