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# How to Grow Spinach Plants: The Complete Guide



Photo Credit: samotrebizan/Getty Images

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*Spinacia oleracea*

Pla

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Type:

[Vegetable](#)

Sun

Exposure:

[Full Sun](#)

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# Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Spinach

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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**Spinach**, a super-cold-hardy leafy green, is a popular crop that thrives in spring and fall and even winter in some areas. Learn more about planting, growing, and harvesting nutritious spinach in your home garden.

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## About Spinach

Spinach has similar cool-season growing con-

... ..

in iron, calcium, and vitamins than most cultivated greens and is one of the best sources of vitamins A, B, and C.

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- [How to Grow Swiss Chard Plants: The Complete Guide](#)
- [Edible Weeds: A List of 20 Edible Weeds in the Garden](#)
- [Five Fresh Greens to Grow All Year Round](#)

## PLANTING

Spinach tolerates full sun to light shade; prepare soil about a week before planting by mixing in compost. Alternatively, prepare the soil in late summer or early fall, when spinach can also be sown where winters are mild.

### When to Plant Spinach

- Spinach requires 6 weeks of cool weather from seeding to harvest; this is generally spring or fall, though many gardeners have better luck in the fall.
- Although seeds can be started indoors, it is not recommended, as seedlings are difficult to transplant.
- In the fall, sow seeds when the soil is 70°F or cooler. See our fall planting calendar.

young plants with a cold frame or thick mulch, then remove the protection when the soil temperature in your area reaches 40°F in spring. Remove the mulch to harvest some spinach, then replace the mulch.

- If planting in the early spring, sow seeds as soon as the ground warms to 40°F. (Cover the soil with black plastic to speed its warming.)
- To distract leaf miners, sow spinach seeds and radish seeds in alternate rows. Leaf miner damage to radish tops does not affect their root growth.
- Common spinach cannot grow in midsummer as it's not cool enough. (For a summer harvest, try New Zealand Spinach or Malabar Spinach, two similar leafy greens that are more heat tolerant.)

## How to Plant Spinach

- Sow seeds 1/2 of an inch deep every 2 inches and cover with 1/2 inch of soil.
- Plant in rows 12 to 18 inches apart, or sprinkle over a wide row or bed.
- Sow every couple of weeks during early spring for a continuous harvest.

## GROWING

- Water spinach to keep soil constantly moist.
- Use row covers to maintain cool soil and deter pests.
- When seedlings sprout to about 2 inches, thin them to 3-4 inches apart. You can eat the thinnings.
- Beyond thinning, no cultivation is necessary. Roots are shallow and easily damaged.
- Water regularly and mulch to retain moisture.
- When plants reach one-third of their growth, side-dress with a high-nitrogen fertilizer as needed. Nutrient deficiencies may appear as yellow or pale leaves, stunted or distorted growth, a purpling or bronzing of leaves, leaves dropping early, or other symptoms.
- In early spring and late fall: Spinach can tolerate the cold; it can survive a frost and temps down to 15°F (-9°C). (See local frost dates) Young spinach is more tender; cover if cold temps are in the forecast.

## Types

There are four main types of spinach suited for spring and fall plantings.

is good for containers; 'Catalina' is heat-tolerant and resistant to downy mildew.

- **Savoy spinach** has curly, crinkled, dark-green leaves, e.g. 'Bloomsdale.' The 'Winter Bloomsdale' variety is a crinkled-leaf, fall variety, tolerant to mosaic viruses.
- **Semi-Savoy** has slightly crinkled leaves and can be difficult to seed. 'Melody' is resistant to cucumber mosaic virus and downy mildew; mildew-resistant 'Remington' will grow in spring, summer, or fall; 'Tyee' can be planted in spring or fall, and is resistant to downy mildew.
- **Smooth- or flat-leaf** (also called plain leaf) varieties have spade-shaped leaves. 'Giant Nobel' is a plain leaf variety and an heirloom that is slow to bolt; 'Nordic IV' is bolt-resistant.
- **Malabar Spinach** (*Basella alba*), a vine, and **New Zealand Spinach** (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*), a perennial, are two heat-tolerant leafy greens that resemble common spinach; both are heat-tolerant. Grow them in the summer when common spinach can't take the heat.

## HARVESTING

- Harvest a few outer leaves from each plant

the entire plant, cutting the stem at the base.

- Don't wait too long to harvest or wait for larger leaves. Bitterness will set in quickly after maturity. Be aware of day length and heat: Increasing daylight (about 14 hours or longer) and warmer seasonal temperatures can cause spinach to bolt (develop a large stalk with narrower leaves and buds/flowers/seeds), which makes the leaf taste bitter.
- If spinach starts to bolt, pull the plant and use the leaves. Or try to slow the bolting: Pinch off the flower/seed heads, keep the soil moist, and provide shade.



*Harvesting spinach.  
Photo by Deyan Georgiev/Shutterstock.*

## How to Store Spinach

Fresh spinach leaves are good for up to a week. Too much moisture hastens its demise. So store fresh spinach unwashed and don't

towel and put in a freezer bag with the towel to absorb moisture.

Given its short shelf life, spinach is perfect for freezing. Wash, trim off ends and yellowing leaves, blanch, and pack into freezer bags. [See how to freeze spinach.](#)

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PESTS/DISEASES

Spinach Pests and Diseases

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<a href="#">Aphids</a>	Insect	Misshapen/yellow leaves; sticky "honeydew" (ex	Grow <a href="#">companion plants</a> ; knock off with water spray



Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
			around plants; wipe leaves with a 1 to 2 percent so- lution of dish soap (no additives) and water every 2 to 3 days for 2 weeks; add native plants to invite <a href="#">beneficial</a> <a href="#">insects</a>
<b>Downy mildew</b>	Fungus	Yellow, angular spots on upper leaf surfaces that turn brown; white/purple/gray cottony growth on leaf undersides only; distorted leaves; defoliation	Remove plant debris; choose resistant varieties; ensure good air circulation; avoid overhead watering
<b>Leaf miners</b>	Insect	Meandering blisters in leaves caused by tunneling larvae	Remove infested leaves, weed diligently; use row covers; till soil early in season; rotate crops
<b>Leaf spot (Cercospora)</b>	Fungus	Many small brown spots with red-purple halos on leaves that enlarge and turn gray; centers of spots eventually	Destroy infected plants; weed; avoid overhead watering; ensure good air circula-

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<a href="#">Spinach blight (mosaic virus)</a>	Virus	Varies with plant, but may include stunting, mottled green/yellow/white pattern or ringed spots on leaves; distorted leaf growth	Destroy infected plants; choose resistant varieties and certified virus-free seed; use row covers; disinfect tools; weed; control aphids; use mulch
White rust	Fungus	Chalk-white blisters mainly on leaf undersides; small, yellow-green spots or blisters, sometimes in circular arrangement, on upper leaf surfaces; possible distortion or galls; stems may also be infected	Destroy infected plants; choose resistant varieties; weed; destroy crop residue; rotate crops

## WIT AND WISDOM

- Phenology, the study of signs, suggests planting spinach when crocuses are blooming.
- Similarly, in areas where [lilacs](#) grow, old-time farmers say to plant spinach when lilacs are in first leaf.

your garden space, and have a leafy green crop at the ready to cover the bare spots left by deadheaded spring flowers.

## RECIPES

**PASTA SALAD WITH SPINACH AND  
ARTICHOKES**

**SPINACH-STUFFED TOMATOES**

**CHICKEN SPINACH SALAD WITH  
ORANGES, DATES, AND GOAT  
CHEESE**

**SPINACH LASAGNA**

**SPINACH AND CHEESE-STUFFED  
CHICKEN BREASTS**

## COOKING NOTES

- A pinch of baking soda in the cooking water keeps the spinach greener.
- Refresh wilted spinach by placing it in a bowl of ice water for a few minutes before using it.
- Spinach boosts your brainpower, but it can

- Raw, young spinach is best in salads and smoothies; more mature spinach is excellent sautéed in heated olive oil.
- Embrace your leafy greens! Learn more about the [health benefits of going green!](#)

## VEGETABLES

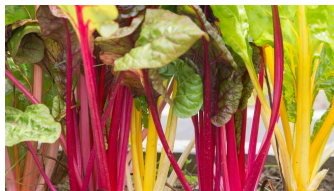
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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# COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Shabana (not verified) 10 months 1 week ago

To grow spinach, plant seeds in rich, well-draining soil in cool weather, keep soil moist, and harvest outer leaves regularly.  
<https://subwaymenusprice.com/>

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REPLY

Shabana (not verified) 10 months 1 week ago

that is an informative post. [subwaymenusprice.com](https://subwaymenusprice.com)

REPLY

Laurie (not verified) 1 year 3 months ago

Hi - just a heads up that there is a bullet point about radishes in the “When to plant spinach” section.

REPLY

Today i learned something new, I appreciate you

**REPLY**

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**tom chase (not verified)** 3 years 2 months ago

I've come across "page not found" when accessing  
in various vegetable articles for "health benefits of  
going green".

At 82, need all the health I can get. Thanks

Tom

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 3 years 2 months ago

Thanks for letting us know the link was  
broken! Here's

the article: <https://www.almanac.com/go-leafy-greens>

**REPLY**

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**PATTI (not verified)** 3 years 7 months ago

I use some baby spinach, salads only as it has barely  
any flavor. I prefer full-grown old fashioned regular  
spinach, which has a full earthy flavor and best for

leafy vegetable giving great nutrition. I have been able to get it in one supermarket chain. Please tell me where I can get this to plant in my garden.

**REPLY**

**Anne (not verified)** 3 years 5 months ago

I had the same problem not finding Curly leaf green Spinach; I found some @ Stop&Shop CT; ask the produce manager; ty; :)

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 3 years 7 months ago

Hi Patti, Here is a great source for spinach. This company carries the original and heirloom spinach seeds so I think you'll find a variety to suit you!

<https://www.rareseeds.com/store/vegetables/spinach>

**REPLY**



I have harvested and enjoyed all the spinach I planted (first time grower), do I leave the empty spinach stalk in the ground for next year? Or do I pull it all out and plant new seeds next year?

REPLY

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