



Arugula



Scientific Name: *Eruca sativa* (cultivated) / *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* (wild)

Vernacular/regional names: garden rocket, rocket, eruca, rocket salad, rucola, & arugula.

Plant Family: Brassicaceae (mustards/cabbage family). Formerly known as the Cruciferae (cross-bearing) family, which includes broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, mustards, turnip, radish, and kohlrabi. Arugula and mustard flowers have 4-petals that resemble a cross.

EarthDance Variety: “Astro”

Other varieties for Missouri growers: “Rocket Salad, Roquette”, and “Sylvetta” (wild).

Days to Maturity: 30-45 days

History, Characteristics, and Versatility

History & Folklore:

- This cool season annual is native to the Mediterranean area. It has been used since Ancient Roman times and is considered an aphrodisiac.
- It is currently very popular in Italy & France, and is now grown around the world.
- Arugula was primarily collected in the wild, and only within the last 20 years has it been cultivated on a large scale within the United States.
- The green is marketed in America as “currently enjoying a resurgence of popularity as a salad green”.

Description: 2”-6” tall, soft green leaves; flower is white with purple veins. Cultivated arugula resembles an elongated oak leaf, while wild arugula resembles dandelion leaves.

Taste: mustardy, peppery, tart, spicy, hints of nut flavor. Very robust and rich!

Health benefits: Leaves are high in vitamin C and potassium. Seeds are rich in protein and carbohydrates.

Versatility & Recipes: Arugula leaves, stems, flowers and seeds are all edible.

- Raw leaves:
 - o Long, mature leaves are used in salads as a lettuce (open/no head) and are typically mixed with other greens as in a mesclun mix.
 - o Pesto, meaning ‘crushed’, made with arugula is very tasty and simple to prepare. Eat it with bread, crackers, tossed with pasta or spread on a sandwich or in a wrap.
 - o Italy: Fresh leaves are placed on pizza at the end of cooking.
 - o Brazil: A salad of arugula, Mozzarella and sun-dried tomato is a popular dish (similar to a Caprese salad made with basil).
- Cooked:
 - o Steam or sauté the leaves and toss with pasta, oil and herbs.

- Add leaves and flowers to soups for a rich flavor.
- Egypt: arugula is commonly eaten with stewed fava beans for breakfast.
- Drink: On the island of Ischia in the Gulf of Naples (Italy), a digestive alcohol called *rucolino* is made from arugula. This local specialty is enjoyed in small quantities following a meal, and washes down easily.
- Flowers are used as an edible garnish in a variety of salads.
- Mature seeds (known as Gargeer in India) are pressed to make taramira oil used in pickling and as a salad or cooking oil. The remaining solids are then used to make bush bread (seed cake) as food for livestock.

Growing Arugula

Seed start date: 2-4 weeks before average last frost, with successive plantings every 3 weeks until 2 weeks before average first frost. Recommended to directly seed into the soil, but can start indoors 4-6 weeks before last frost. Directly seeded at EarthDance the week of 3/12.

Germination & Maturity: Optimal soil temperature for germination is 40-55 degrees Fahrenheit. Sprouts appear in about 7-10 days and plants are mature in about 30-45 days.

Spacing:

- At EarthDance: 60 feet, broadcast seeded (~300 row feet)
- For row spacing, groups of 4 seeds spaced 4-6" apart, with 6" between rows is recommended.
- Seeds can be planted closer together (1-2" apart) for harvesting the young seedlings, and thus are good for container growing. Space farther apart to allow plants to grow to full maturity.

Planting Depth: ¼"

Thinning: 1"-6" (depending on if you are harvesting young leaves, or wanting plants to flower).

Common Pests and Diseases: Generally, arugula is pest and disease free. Flea beetles and cabbage worms are the most common pests and can be avoided by covering plants with row cover.

Harvest Method: Pick leaves 1" from base or cut off plant at ground level when the leaves are between 2" and 6" long. Harvest before the plant begins to flower, or let it flower and eat those too. In warm weather, the leaves will turn bitter and then the plant goes to seed. So plant early and often!

Storage: As with most greens, leaves should be rinsed with cool water as soon after harvesting as possible. Spin, pat, or leave out to air dry. Store in plastic bags in refrigerator for 1-2 weeks.

Seed Saving: Allow plants to overwinter after the fall harvest, and let the seedpod ripen and dry out while still on the plant in the spring, then remove the seeds. Dried seeds store up to 4 years.

Sources

Botanical Interests organic arugula seed packets (also found at www.botanicalinterests.com)
<http://www.jeffersonfarm.org/Vegetable%20Guides/Arugula%20Guide%20Sheet.pdf>
<http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/foods/show/3633>
<http://howtosavesseeds.com/seedsavingdetails.php>
http://myseedgarden.blogspot.com/2010_05_01_archive.html
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eruca_sativa