

Lettuce and Spinach Growing Guidelines

by Shirley Whitehurst, Chesapeake Master Gardner Intern.

According to Virginia Tech vegetable garden planting timetable for Tidewater area, the last frost for the Tidewater area is approximately 4/10-4/21 in the spring.

Spinach is to be planted by seed 30-60 days or (2/14 to 3/16) before the last spring frost and harvested up to 3 weeks past that date.

Leaf lettuce can be planted as seed as soon as 40 days (3/6thru 4/15) before or right up to the last spring frost date and harvested up to five weeks past the last frost date.

What in the world does that mean you ask??? Permaculture Research institute says it comes down to the fact that these plants like it cool and do not do well in the heat of summer! You plant them inside a greenhouse or in your house weeks before the last spring frost, keeping them warm and moist, not wet. After hardening you transplant them outside to grow in full sun until it gets hot and they expire!

If you continuously put down seed every 2 weeks and harvest only the outside leaves you can have spinach and lettuce until it gets hot! After a few months of no spinach and lettuce you can then start planting again in late summer protecting them from heat and they will mature and grow again in the cool fall and early winter!

The USDA reports that greens are high in antioxidants that can lower your risk of some cancers by protecting your cells. Plus, they are a great source of nutrition, full of Vitamins A, C, K and E, iron, fiber, magnesium, potassium and calcium! They are low in calories, sodium, carbohydrates and cholesterol. One research study by the University of Rushmore on aging found greens beneficial in slowing cognitive dysfunction in the aging population.



References

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Virginia Tech PDF Publication 426-331. Vegetable Garden Guide and Recommended Planting Dates.