

Microgreens Growing Guide

To grow microgreens indoors you will need:

- microgreen seeds (see “Selecting Microgreen Seeds” below)
- a shallow container to use as a growing tray (like a plastic clamshell from berries). It should have drainage holes or you can punch drainage holes.
- a clear lid for the container or plastic wrap/bag to cover
- seed-starting potting mix or peat moss

Also useful: a teaspoon, a spray bottle to mist the seeds, and something to catch drips from the growing tray. You will need clean, sharp scissors to harvest your greens.

Before you start:

- Decide where to keep your tray while the seeds sprout and where you will keep it once the seeds are growing. Check the “Growing Microgreens” section below for heat and light requirements.
- Wash growing trays with hot, soapy water and allow to air dry.
- Punch small holes along the bottom of the plastic tray if it doesn’t have drainage holes.
- Wash hands and clean any surfaces where you will be working.

Planting seeds:

- Measure out enough potting mix or peat moss to almost fill the growing tray.
- In a bowl or plastic bag, add water to the potting mix until it is wet enough to hold together but not drippy. Work the mix to make sure it is evenly wet.
- Place potting mix in the growing tray and pat lightly to even out so that it is about ½ inch below the top edge.
- Use a separate tray for each type of seed you want to plant; seeds grow at different rates.
- Sprinkle seeds evenly over the top of the potting mix – you want about 10 seeds per square inch. For small seeds (like broccoli), about 1 teaspoon will cover the surface in a 5x5 pint container. For larger seeds (like beets), use 2 teaspoons.
- Very gently press seeds into the potting mix – you don’t want to bury them; you just want good contact with the soil.
- Use a spray bottle to gently moisten the seeds.
- Cover the growing tray with the lid, plastic wrap, or place it in a zipper bag. This will act as a mini greenhouse.

Growing microgreens:

- Place the growing trays somewhere warm with something under them to catch any drips. The potting mix needs to be about 70-75° F for the seeds to germinate. Don’t place trays near a drafty window (yet), warmth is more important than light for the first few days. If your house isn’t warm enough, try the top of the refrigerator, on a seed warming mat, or on a heating pad set to the lowest setting. If using a heating pad, put the covered growing tray on a plate (not plastic or paper) to keep the pad from getting wet.
- Check the tray every day. If you don’t see moisture on the inside of the lid/plastic, mist again with the spray bottle. The vegetable seeds generally take 2-4 days to sprout; herbs, like basil, take a little longer.

- Once the seeds are about half an inch tall, remove the cover to increase air circulation. Move sprouts to a place where they will get 6-8 hours of light every day. This can be by a south-facing window, under a grow-light, or a combination of the two if your window does not get enough hours of light. You don't need a special grow light; you can buy a grow-light bulb for an existing lamp.
- Gently feel the potting mix in an area where seeds aren't growing – if it is dry or if the seedlings start to wilt, you need to water. You may only have to water once or twice a week, depending on the temperature and humidity of the air in your home. Watering from below will reduce the chance of fungus developing on your greens. To water from below, place the tray in a shallow pan of water and let the potting mix soak up the water. Don't leave the trays sitting in water, let them sit for 10-15 minutes and remove. Let excess water drain.
- Watch carefully to make sure you don't get any fungus in the trays. To prevent fungal growth, make sure there is good air circulation around the seedlings. If you do spot fungus, empty the trays and start again. Clean the tray and sterilize the potting mix before reusing (see "Sterilizing Potting Mix," below).

Harvesting microgreens

- Microgreens are ready to eat when they are 1 ½ to 2 inches tall and they have 2-4 leaves. Most should be ready to harvest 10-14 days after planting. Basil (and other herbs) will take about 20 days.
- Use clean, sharp scissors to cut off the seedlings just above the soil level. It's all edible!
- It's a good idea to harvest the microgreens all at once and keep them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. They should last about a week – don't wash them until you are ready to use them. If you harvest some and leave the rest in the growing trays, you increase the chances that fungus or mold will start to grow.
- Microgreens taste great in salads, on sandwiches, and topping dips! Use your imagination!

After harvest

- You can reuse the potting mix if you sterilize it. (see "Sterilizing Potting Mix," below). Don't reuse without sterilizing, and don't use the same potting mix more than 3 times. You can empty potting mix you are not going to use again into the compost pile or mix into your garden.
- Wash and store the growing trays for future use. You can grow microgreens indoors all year long.

Sterilizing Potting Mix

You will need: a plastic bag with a zipper seal, a microwave, a meat or candy thermometer, a large microwave safe plate or bowl, and oven mitts.

- Remove leftover stems, roots, and leaves, then put potting mix in the zipper bag.
- Add enough clean water to dampen the soil. Mix until evenly wet – meaning the potting mix should hold together in a ball, but not be drippy wet. Add more water, about ¼ cup at a time, if needed to get the right consistency.
- Place zipper bag containing the mix on a microwave safe plate in the microwave. **Do not seal the bag.**
- Microwave on high until potting mix temperature reaches 180 – 200°F.
- Let potting mix cool before handling.
- Seal bag to keep the mix sterile until ready to use.



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Selecting Microgreen Seeds

Almost any vegetable or herb seed can be used for microgreens. Those commonly sold for growing microgreens are leafy greens like arugula, large-leaved herbs like basil, and root vegetables with tasty leaves like beets. There are even edible flower varieties that make good microgreens like nasturtium. You can find seeds specifically sold for microgreens online and at local garden centers. These are usually selected to be microgreens because of quick sprouting times and resistance to fungus. They are also often organic.

What vegetables should NOT be used for microgreens?

- Anything in the nightshade family has poisonous leaves. This includes tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and potatoes.

We also recommend:

- Beginning growers should avoid delicate lettuce varieties and “head” forming lettuce which can bruise and wilt easily.
- Legumes like beans and peas are best sprouted using a soilless technique that is not covered in this growing guide.

If you aren't sure what is good to plant, go online to one of the many seed suppliers and see what vegetable varieties they include as “microgreens.”

Try different microgreen varieties! Look online for descriptions of different seeds: how they taste, growing times, and recipes for using them. Our favorites include radishes (quick growing and spicy), broccoli (among the highest nutrients), and Swiss chard (fun colors).