

Tips for Growing a Leafy Green Garden



GROWING A LEAFY GREEN GARDEN

Growing a leafy green garden is quick, easy and does not require much room. Leafy greens grow just as well in the ground as they do in pots. They are perfect for small or temporary gardens.

Leafy greens refer to lettuce, rocket, spinach, kale, silverbeet and rainbow chard. Lettuce and rocket provide a great healthy base for a range of salads, while spinach, kale and silverbeet can be chopped up and used to add flavour and nutrition to a range of recipes.

The best thing about growing your own leafy greens, is having a constant supply of ready-to-use healthy veggies in the kitchen. It is also cheaper, healthier and tastier.

PLANTING POSITION

Plant in a sunny position, with at least 6 hours of sun.

If planting in the warmer months (e.g. day time temperatures above 24°C), plant in a position that receives morning sun and afternoon shade. This will prevent the plants from bolting (forming seeds).

SOIL

Leafy greens tend to be shallow rooted plants and do best with nitrogen rich soil. Prepare the soil before sowing seeds or planting seedlings, by adding plenty of compost or manure.

AT PLANTING

Leafy greens are easy to grow from seed. Follow the recommended planting directions for the specific leafy green seeds or seedlings. Water in well with a weak solution of seaweed or worm wee tea.

To enjoy a continuous harvest plant loose-leaf varieties that are easy to pick as you go, and sow seeds or plant seedlings every few weeks during the growing period.

WATERING

Leafy greens grow well in a slightly moist soil. Avoid watering with frequent liquid fertiliser applications, as this can encourage rapid growth and faster bolting.

HARVESTING YOUR LEAFY GREENS

Enjoy harvesting leafy greens as you need by harvesting the quantity of leaves you require on each occasion. When plants bolt, the flavour will become bitter and it is time to remove the plant for the compost or chook feed.

INTERPLANTING

Interplanting is a way to grow more vegetables and enjoy higher yields in the space available. Leafy greens are perfect to interplant because they are smaller fast growing crops. Try planting your leafy greens in amongst tomatoes, cabbages, capsicums or eggplant, which are larger, slow maturing, heat loving crops. The tomatoes or cabbages will provide some shade relief and help keep the soil cool, while the leafy greens will mature and be harvested before the other crops get too large to completely over shade them.

GARDENING IN POTS

A benefit of gardening in pots is that they can be moved to chase or avoid the sun and weather. Another benefit is that renters can feel good about investing in their veggie patch and taking it with them when moving.

While pots can reduce your watering requirements (because you can more closely monitor moisture conditions) pots also dry out faster and need closer attention. Dark pots will absorb more heat and dry out faster than lighter coloured pots. Plants may also need more regular fertilising in pots.

Any pot or container can be planted into, as long as it is large enough to hold the plant and has good drainage. Also consider what the pot is made out of, e.g. some treated wood may contain chemical compounds that could leach into the soil.

