

# Lettuce: An Early Spring Garden Treat

Lettuce is a wonderful vegetable for the early spring garden. The many colors and shapes of the lettuce leaves and also the flavors can add a wonderful diversity to a salad. There are dozens of different varieties and several types of lettuce that can be grown in this area that will have better flavor and nutrition than the iceberg type salad greens one often encounters in a typical restaurant salad.

## Planting Lettuce

Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*), like radishes, should be planted in the spring as early as you can get into the garden to work the soil. The plants can even tolerate a light frost. It is a cool season crop, growing best before temperatures get up into the 80's. The seed can germinate in fairly cool soils too, down around 45 degrees Fahrenheit but you will get better germination once the soil has warmed up to about 50-55 degrees Fahrenheit.

The seed of some lettuce varieties needs light in order to germinate. The seed is also quite small so barely cover the seed then gently firm the soil over the seed with your hand as you are planting. The seed is very light in weight so try to plant when the wind is calm. Since the seed is rather fine, people often plant the seed too thickly.

Try mixing the seed with a seed starting or potting soil mix, then scatter that in the row. The seed starting mix will help distribute the seed and also acts as a light covering for the seed to help it germinate more uniformly. You may also be able to find pelleted seed, which makes it larger and easier to plant more evenly.

Seed tape is also available - it has seed stuck to it in the correct spacing. Just lay out the tape in the row and you will be ready to go. Some people have made their own "seed tape" using toilet paper. Lay out a length of toilet paper. Mist it a bit with water then sprinkle out seed on toilet paper along the center of the strip at about the spacing listed on the seed packet. Mist it again, then take one of the long edges and fold it over the top of the seed. Do the same with the other side. Firm down the layers with your hand and you are ready to take your DIY "seed TP" out to the garden.



No matter which way you sow your seeds, you can always thin out some of the extra plants if they get planted too thickly.

## Spacing

Lettuce can be planted in a single, double or triple row, with at least 6-inches between rows or spread out over a wider row, perhaps 12-inches wide. Just try to get the spacing between the plants about right. That will be particularly important for the loose head types of lettuce like Romaine or Butter Head. These types of lettuce have a longer maturity time and need more space to grow and produce a nice sized head. Lettuce can be planted in peat-pots or plug flats in a greenhouse or sunny window to get a jump on spring. The small plants can be transplanted to the garden. The loose-leaf lettuce types are much more forgiving. If they have more room to grow, they will fill in, otherwise they will take up what space they have available to them. Usually there is plenty of seed in a couple packets of seed to satisfy the needs of a small family.

## Leaf Lettuce best adapted for this climate

Lettuce has been a popular vegetable since as early as 550 B.C. where it was cultivated in and around Egypt, Greece and Rome. In fact, we still grow varieties descended from some of those early wild selections now known as Romaine or Cos types of lettuce.

Leaf lettuce is the best adapted type of lettuce for production in gardens in our area. It is early-maturing, which means that we can often get a good harvest before the weather warms and the lettuce bolts or flowers. Leaf lettuce also offers the advantage of being able to be harvested multiple times. Just use a scissors or sharp knife to sheer off the tender leaves, near the base of the plant.

New leaves will grow up in a week or 10 days so you can harvest it again. Generally, once the weather starts to get hot, later in June, lettuce will bolt, the leaves will get tough and taste bitter.

Try harvesting the youngest leaves, near the top of the plant to get the best of what is left. Then, pull the



plants and add them to your compost pile. There are dozens of different varieties of leaf lettuce with leaf color ranging from plain green to pink, dark red, burgundy and nearly black. Some varieties offer speckled leaves too. Leaf shape can also be quite variable from mostly rounded to oak-leaf in shape or even more dissected and finely textured.

'Sandy' is an oak-leaf type of leaf lettuce that is a 2015 All-America Selections Winner.

Butterhead is another type of lettuce. It also forms heads, a bit more compact than Romaine but more rounded in shape than the Romaine types. Butterhead lettuce is also a longer season lettuce so try starting seed indoors. It might be better suited to growing in cooler areas, perhaps in the Black Hills where the weather stays cooler into the summer. 'Buttercrunch', a 1963 All-America Selections winner is still a popular variety of lettuce today. There are even smaller varieties that would work well in containers. Of course the leaf lettuce would also work well in containers.

Romaine lettuce is one type of lettuce that is significantly higher in important nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin K, pro-vitamin A and folate, compared to the typical iceberg type of lettuce. Red leafed Romaines as well as other red-leafed types of lettuce will also have higher anti-oxidant content. Lettuce is also a good source of fiber and minerals like manganese, potassium, iron and calcium, and is also low in calories.

For more information, visit the National Garden Bureau and search for lettuce or go to the All American Selections website to learn more about 'Sandy' or 'Buttercrunch' lettuce.

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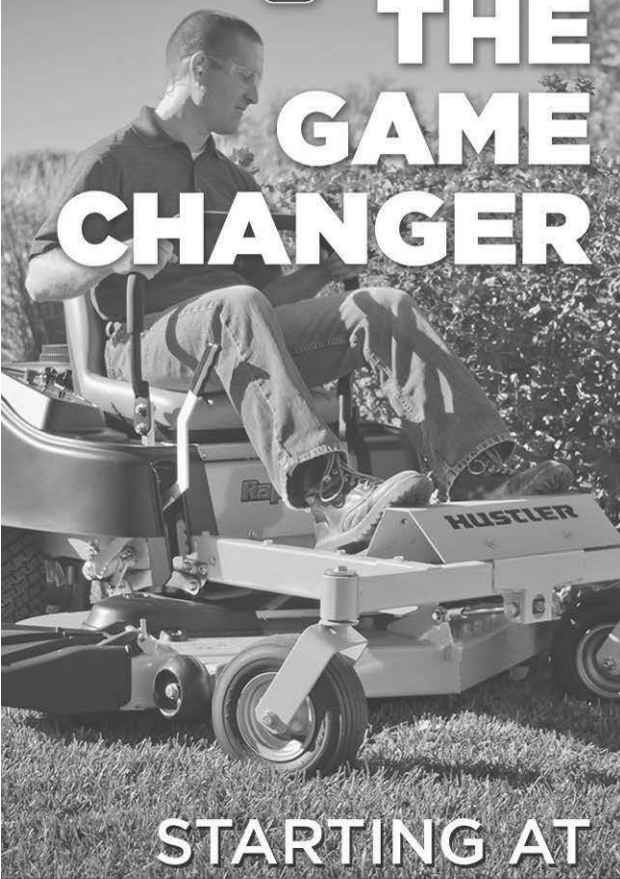
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*In case of inclement weather auction will be held at city auditorium*

**LOCATED: 405 12th Avenue, Tyndall, SD**

2 blocks south and 1/2 block east of high school in Tyndall

**Real Estate** consists of a 1486 sq ft 1 story 3 bedroom home with large 2 stall garage/shop building. Situated on a nicely landscaped 150'x142' lot this clean well maintained home offers a large kitchen, large master bedroom, enclosed patio, a nice floor plan and a great location just 2 blocks from Bon Homme school.

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** Lots 5,6,8,7 Block 2 Millers Addition

**TERMS & CONDITIONS:** \$5,000 non refundable down payment day of auction with balance due at closing. Title Insurance and closing service fees split 50-50 between buyer and seller. 2015 taxes will be prorated to closing. Possession upon receipt of final payment. Announcements day of auction take precedence over printed material. Peterson Auctioneers are representing sellers.

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Included are guns, sporting goods, toys, antiques, collectibles, lawn, garden, shop, household and miscellaneous items.

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**A complete listing will appear in a future issue**

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Fill the puzzle so that every row, every column, and every section contain the numbers 1-9 without repeating a number.

		7					5
	6		2		3		
5				9		8	6
				2			
	2	5				3	1
				3			
3	1			6			8
			8		7		9
9					4		

INTERMEDIATE

INT BOOK 59 #2

**Last Tuesday's Solution**

2	1	3	4	8	7	6	5	9
4	7	5	2	6	9	3	1	8
8	9	6	3	1	5	4	7	2
9	4	1	6	5	8	7	2	3
3	8	7	1	9	2	5	4	6
5	6	2	7	4	3	9	8	1
1	3	4	5	2	6	8	9	7
7	5	8	9	3	1	2	6	4
6	2	9	8	7	4	1	3	5

**su|do|ku**

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Check next Tuesday's paper for the solution to today's puzzle.

EA BOOK 59 #2