GARDENING FOR GOOD NUTRITION

A guide to growing your own healthy food

solid ground

Building community to end poverty

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This guide was created by Solid Ground's Food Access & Education staff. We hold a vision for a world where everyone has access to quality food – and the information and education that they need to provide nutrition for their families.

Program activities include...

- Provide space for and lead garden and environmental education programs.
- Grow and donate organic vegetables.
- Provide direct engagement opportunities with the community through service learning, events and land stewardship.
- Provide meaningful service learning opportunities for the wider community to support Lettuce Link's core work and to learn about the intersections between the environment, food systems and social justice.
- Distribute resources and provide education to gardeners living on low incomes and community-based food bank gardeners throughout Seattle.

GARDENING AT HOME

Container vs. Yard Gardens... Which type is right for you?

Container Gardens

If you don't have a lot of space or a yard, consider starting a container garden. If you do have a yard but your soil is (or might be) unsafe because of lead or other contaminants, use containers. Containers are portable and can be moved into the sun and shade as necessary. Container gardens do need to be watered often – sometimes daily. Check for dry soil with your fingers. Be sure that the containers you use allow proper water drainage so the roots don't rot.

Your containers should:

- Hold 1-5 gallons of soil.
- Have drainage holes in the bottom (so roots won't rot). Punch/drill them in if needed.
- Be opaque (i.e., not see-through; light exposure can cause root rot and fungus).

IMPORTANT: ***Never use a container that held anything toxic, poisonous or inedible!!! Plants will absorb the toxins and be toxic if you eat them.***

Yard Gardens… Protect yourself from lead

If you choose to plant a yard garden, consider planting in raised beds filled with fertilized, organic and "safe" (contaminant-free) soil. If you plant directly into the ground, plant away from houses, sheds, garages or busy roads. Water dripping off buildings and paint chips from houses can put lead into the soil – which can be absorbed by your plants and cause lead poisoning. Testing is the best way to know if you have lead in your soil. Certain plants absorb more lead than others when planted in contaminated soil. Because of this, if you are unsure about the quality of your soil, you may want to grow only plants with a low lead uptake in a yard garden. If soil is contaminated, plants with a high lead uptake should only be planted in containers.

HIGH lead uptake: • lettuce • spinach • carrots • endive • cress • beets

MEDIUM lead uptake: • onions • mustard greens • potatoes • radishes

LOW lead uptake: • corn • cauliflower • asparagus • celery • berries

VERY LOW lead uptake: • beans • peas • tomatoes • tree fruits

STARTING YOUR GARDEN

In Containers

- **Plan your garden.** Decide what you will grow and how much space you have for containers. Choose a sunny location. Plants need at least 4-6 hours of direct sun each day.
- **Choose containers.** Put in drainage holes if needed and fill with organic soil (which can be purchased at most garden stores).
- **Plant seeds directly into the soil-filled containers,** then water. As a general rule, plant seeds twice as deep as they are big. If your containers are portable, you can start them indoors as early as February or March. Wait 4-6 weeks before moving them outside, and transplant to larger containers if needed.
- **Start your outdoor garden on a dry day.** Wait until mid-March to sow seeds in outdoor containers and/or move cool-weather plants outside so seeds and starts won't be caught in a frost. Start hot-season plants indoors; wait until May or June to move outside to give plants enough time and hot weather to mature before the end of summer. (See pp. 8-27 for the best times to plant different vegetables.)
- **Water seeds and plants in the early morning or at dusk** so that less water evaporates.
- **Use stakes, strings or trellises** to support heavy and/or viney plants. (See lists, p. 3.)
- **Weed as needed.** Some plants may grow larger than expected. Be sure to give plants plenty of room to grow. Transplant to larger containers if necessary.

In the Ground

- **Plan your garden.** Decide what you will grow and where to determine how much space you need. Choose a sunny location. Plants need at least 4-6 hours of sun each day.
- **Build fertile soil.** (See instructions, p. 3.)
- **Build raised beds.** Use stones, concrete blocks or branches as a border and fill in beds with organic soil (about 12" deep) mixed with 2-3" of compost. If you are certain your soil is lead-free, dig a few inches deep into the ground, add 2-3" of compost, and mix.
- **Start your garden on a dry day.** To avoid frost, wait until mid-March to plant cool weather plants and seeds and mid-May or June for hot-weather plants. (See pp. 8-27.)
- **Plant seeds and starts directly into the soil, then water.** As a general rule, plant seeds twice as deep as they are big. Follow seed packet instructions for spacing between rows.
- **Water seeds and plants in the early morning or at dusk** so that less water evaporates.
- **Use stakes, strings or trellises** to support heavy and/or viney plants. (See lists, p. 3.)
- **Weed as needed.** Once plants are established, cover the ground around plants with mulch (newspaper, compost or straw) to help keep weeds away and the ground moist.

Containers You Can Use

- Free pots from the pot exchange bin at Swanson's Nursery (9701 15th Ave NW; **206.782.2543**)
- Yogurt tubs (transplant to larger containers later)
- Dish pans, wash basins, buckets and plastic tubs with holes for drainage
- Baskets lined with paper bags
- Planters, flower pots, wire baskets, and clay or ceramic pots
- Unpainted/untreated wooden boxes and barrels
- Cement blocks
- Newspapers (for planting seeds)

Which Size Container for Which Plant?

1 gallon:

- Basil
- Cilantro
- Dill
- Garlic
- Parsley
- Most herbs

2-3 gallon:

- Beets
- Bok choy
- Carrots
- Chard
- Collards
- Green onions
- Kale
- Lettuce
- Mustard greens
- Peas*
- Peppers
- Radishes
- Spinach

5 gallon:

- Beans
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cucumbers*
- Eggplant
- Leeks
- Squash*
- Tomatoes*
- Turnips
- Zucchini*

****Viney plants (e.g. peas) need to climb and heavy plants (e.g. tomatoes and peppers) need support. Use stakes, strings and trellises to hold up plants as needed.***

How to Build Fertile Soil

It takes 6-8 weeks to build fertile organic soil that's ready for planting. If you are just starting out, you might want to grow in containers your first year and use your organic soil in raised beds the next. **2)** Dig a few inches deep into the ground and mix up the soil. **1)** Moisten a few sheets of newspaper with water and lay the paper on the soil. **3)** Put compost or straw on top. **4)** Water. **5)** Add a few more layers of newspaper, compost or straw, and water again. **6)** Top with coffee grounds (your local coffee shop will likely give them to you for free) and a layer of black plastic. **7)** You can also leave a thick layer of leaves (1 foot deep) on your planned garden beds over the winter. In the spring, mix the broken-down leaves into soil and top with compost. You can scrape off the whole leaves and put them in your garden paths; they make a great weed barrier.

ALL ABOUT COMPOST

Compost is an inexpensive way to fertilize your garden and help the soil retain moisture. You can buy it or make it yourself. Compost creates a balance of nitrogen and carbon in the soil, which plants' roots require for healthy growth. It also reduces the amount of trash you produce. By forcing biodegradable products to break down faster and using them to add nutrition to soil, you choose to support the health of plants and the earth.

What's in Compost?

Compost is a pile of biodegraded organic materials such as grass clippings, leaves, vegetable scraps, coffee, tea bags, flowers, straw and newspapers – best topped with leaves to help retain heat. Worms are another essential part of composting. The decomposing pile attracts microorganisms and worms, which help to break down the contents. When worms die, they become part of the compost.

Where Can You Find Compost?

Garden stores sell pre-made compost, but you can make it yourself by creating a pile of organic materials (see "What's in Compost" above) in a partly shady area. It can take a year or two for the bottom of the pile to decompose. At that point, you can shovel out what you need and add another layer of leaves to the top. Worm compost bins work faster. (See p. 5 for how to build your own worm bin.)

Why Does a Garden Need Compost?

- To make plants grow bigger and faster.
- To retain moisture in soil.
- To give texture and add nutrients to soil.

Different Ways to Compost

1) Build Your Own Compost Bin

Make a 3-sided compost bin to house your pile (about 3' x 3' x 3') out of chicken wire or wood pallets. If you plan to add kitchen scraps, you'll need to keep out rodents; get a metal garbage can and lid, drill holes in the bottom of the can, and compost inside it. If your compost pile starts to smell bad, add straw, shredded newspaper and grass clippings, and turn the pile with a shovel. Keep a balance of moisture and dryness – damp like a well wrung-out sponge.

2) Build a Worm Compost Bin

You can get worm bins at most garden stores. You can also make your own out of wood – or use a plastic bin with a lid and drainage holes drilled in the bottom. The container should be at least a foot deep and have a tight-fitting lid.

A 4' x 2' x 1' worm bin will compost about 8 pounds of food scraps a week. Fill the worm bin with bedding such as leaves, shredded cardboard or newspaper, and then soak it in water until the bedding is as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

Add about 1 pound of red worms (can be purchased at gardening stores) to the bin. Bury food scraps in the bedding so there is at least 1-2" of bedding over the top. Keep covered with a pizza box or large piece of cardboard to reduce odor. After 3-4 months, most of the bedding will be composted. Push it to one side of the bin and add more bedding on the other side. Bury food scraps in the new bedding until all of the worms have migrated to that side – then you can add the worm-made compost to your garden.

IMPORTANT: ***Do not add any of the following to your compost as they might attract pests, create bad odors or be toxic to you.***

- Animal or human droppings
- meat
- fish
- fat
- grease
- oil
- bones
- lime
- plastic
- metal
- ashes from coal, charcoal or painted/treated wood (such as from a building)

NUTRIENTS & THEIR HEALTH BENEFITS

Vitamin A

Vitamin A keeps our skin smooth and the linings of our mouths, noses, throats, lungs and intestines healthy. We need it for healthy eyes, and it may also help prevent certain types of cancer. We cannot make Vitamin A ourselves, so we must get it in our diets.

B Vitamins

The B vitamins work together to help our bodies use the energy we get from food. Not getting enough in our diets can lead to anemia, diseases of the nervous system, mental confusion and diarrhea.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is essential for life and good health. It has been shown to help prevent common colds, polio, certain types of cancer and heart disease. We cannot make Vitamin C or store it in our bodies, so we must get it in our diets.

Calcium

Calcium is an important mineral for building strong bones and teeth – and a very small amount is needed to help our heart, nerves and muscles work.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. They are also vital in immune system functioning and blood clotting.

Fiber

Fiber is important for keeping the digestive tract working smoothly. It may also reduce the risk of colon cancer. Some types of fiber can help lower blood cholesterol.

Folic Acid

Folic acid, also called folate or folacin, is important for making blood and building cells. A woman's need for folic acid increases during pregnancy because the fetus is constantly growing. If a pregnant woman does not get all the folic acid she and her baby need early in her pregnancy, the fetus will not develop properly.

Iron

Iron is a mineral which is an important part of our red blood cells. It carries oxygen from our lungs to our cells, muscles and organs. Without enough oxygen, our muscles and organs cannot work properly and we feel tired and weak. Women are at risk of iron deficiency because they lose blood and iron during menstruation. Pregnancy and breastfeeding also increase a woman's need for iron.

Magnesium

Magnesium is essential for human life because of its role in our cells. Magnesium deficiency can cause high blood pressure, insomnia and muscle spasms.

Potassium

Potassium is an essential micronutrient that maintains fluid and electrolyte balances in the body. It is also important in muscle contraction. Muscle cramps occur because of a lack of potassium in the body.

Selenium

Selenium may help fight certain types of cancer by enhancing the body's immune system.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Basil

Contains Potassium & Vitamin A. Helps fight migraines, digestive problems & insomnia.

Serving Size:
¼ cup

- Plant indoors in May.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big.
- Soil and nighttime temperatures must be above 50° for basil to thrive.
- Grows well in pots or a window box.
- Transplant outdoors mid-to-late June. Space starts 4-6" apart.
- Basil and tomatoes grow well together.

Beans

Good source of Potassium, Folic Acid, Vitamin C, Calcium & Fiber. Believed to cleanse the blood.

Serving Size:
¾ cup

- Plant May-July.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big in full sun, 3" apart.
- For ***pole beans***, leave 3' between rows; for ***bush beans***, leave 12-18" between rows.
- Some varieties are vine plants and do best when they can climb stakes or trellises.
- Water frequently.

Beets

Great source of Vitamin A. Also contains Vitamin C & Iron. Believed to be good for the blood.

Serving Size:
¼ cup

- Plant March-August.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 2-3" apart.
- Water every day the first 2 weeks after planting, then water every other day.
- Seeds will sprout 2-3 weeks after planting.
- When plants reach about 6" tall, thin to 2-3" apart. (These baby greens are great to eat.)

BEST TIME TO EAT	STORAGE & EATING TIPS
• Leaves can be eaten any time before flowers develop. • Pick leaves individually to allow plants to grow and produce more leaves for a constant supply.	• Refrigerate. Highly perishable; should be used within 4 days of picking. Wrap in a damp paper towel. • Often served fresh with tomatoes, but also goes well with onions, garlic and olives. • Add at the end of cooking a dish.
• Pods usually mature 2-2½ months after planting. • ***Snap varieties:*** Pick the bright, fresh, tender young pods with immature seeds. • ***Shell varieties***: Let dry on the bush. Shell and store to use in winter.	• Refrigerate. Will keep for 2-3 days when stored in a plastic bag or a tightly sealed container in a cool place. • Eat while still crisp. • Overcooking destroys nutrient value. • Depending on variety, use in soups, salads, dips or eat plain.
• Pick plants 2-2½ months after planting when beet is 1-2" wide. • Nutrient-rich greens can be picked individually – or you can pull up the whole plant. • Becomes tough when left in the ground too long.	• Refrigerate. Store beets and greens in separate plastic bags. Use greens within 4 days; beets store well but taste best if eaten within 2 weeks. • Wash well to remove sand and grit. • ***Greens:*** Steam, sauté or eat raw in salads. • ***Beets:*** Steam, bake, boil or grate raw into salads. Cooked beets freeze well. • To retain maximum flavor and nutrition, peel beets after cooking. Boil for 35-55 minutes, cool slightly and rub off skins.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Bok Choy

Contains Vitamin C, Folic Acid, Calcium, Iron & Vitamin B6.

Serving Size:
1 small bunch

- Plant in March after the last frost.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1” apart in rows 2’ apart. Press soil down well.
- For a steady supply, plant every 2-3 weeks until weather gets hot, then in late summer for a fall crop.
- When plants are 2-3” tall, thin to 3” apart.

Broccoli

Great source of Vitamin C & Potassium. Also contains Vitamin A.

Serving Size:
1 medium stalk

- Plant February-July.
- Start seeds indoors in pots if planting in early spring, or sow directly into the garden after danger of serious frost (late spring).
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 2-3” apart.
- Seeds should begin to sprout 1-2 weeks after planting.
- Water often until heads begin to mature.

Cabbage

Great source of Vitamin C & Folic Acid. Also contains Potassium.

Serving Size:
¼ cup cooked, ½ cup raw

- Plant February-July.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 3” apart. When 2-3” tall, thin to 12” apart.
- If started indoors, move to pots once 2 true leaves form – or transplant outside when 5 leaves form.
- Plant seedling roots deeply and about a 1’ apart.
- Keep soil damp.

BEST TIME TO EAT	STORAGE & EATING TIPS
• Matures in 1½-2 months. • Cut outside leaves first when the plant is still young. • Wait to cut entire plant until 10-14” tall or about 1½-2 months after planting.	• Refrigerate. Use within 2 weeks, but best when used 2-3 days after picking. • Wash well and remove wilted leaves. • Tender, sweet, crisp and delicious. Leaves are excellent in salads; stalks can be sliced like celery and added to soups and salads. • Both stalks and leaves can be stir-fried. Cook stalks first then add the leaves when done cooking.
• Cut heads when tight and fully formed, before they begin to flower. • Cut the large central head with 6” of stalk. • If you leave the roots intact after first cutting, side shoots may develop which can be picked as well.	• Refrigerate. Store in a plastic bag. Best when used within 3-5 days. Eat as soon as possible and never allow heads to yellow. • Wash well and remove tough outer layer of stems. Ideal in salads and stir-fries. • Nutritious raw or cooked. Boil, steam or sauté for about 9-12 minutes (until bright green and tender). • Do not overcook.
• Pick 3½-4 months after planting, when heads are good sized and compact. • To remove a head, cut the stem just above the outer leaves.	• Refrigerate. Use/eat as soon after cutting as possible for best nutrition and taste. • Eat raw in salads, marinate, lightly steam, sauté or add to casseroles, soups and stir-fries. • Cabbage can also be salted to make sauerkraut. • Great with potatoes, carrots and onions.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Carrots

Rich in minerals; especially high in Vitamin A. Believed to be good for the eyes.

Serving Size:
1 medium carrot (3 oz)

- Plant April-July.
- Grow best in a sunny location with rich, light soil and regular watering.
- For best results, dig soil up to 12” deep and loosen/mix well.
- Sprinkle seeds and cover with 1/8” fine soil.
- Water every day the first 2 weeks after planting, then water every other day.
- Once plants grow 2-4” tall, thin to 2” apart.

Chard

Great source of Vitamins A & C, Fiber & Iron. Good for the skin.

Serving Size:
½ cup cooked

- Plant March-April and July-September.
- Grows best in relatively moist fertile soil in the cooler part of the growing season.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 3” apart.
- When 3-4” tall, thin to 12” apart.
- For a constant supply, plant every 3-4 weeks.

Cilantro

Contains Vitamin A, Calcium & Potassium.

Serving Size:
1 tablespoon raw

- Plant seeds anytime after the last frost.
- Likes direct sun.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1-2” apart, in rows 15” apart.
- Seeds sprout in 1½-2½ weeks.
- Grows well in pots, but does not transplant well. For a constant supply, plant seeds every 2-4 weeks.

BEST TIME TO EAT	STORAGE & EATING TIPS
• Can be eaten at any stage, but for highest nutrient content, pull when fully mature (2½-3 months after planting – before they become tough or cracked).	• Refrigerate and remove green stems before storing. Keep in a plastic bag to retain crispness. Best if used within 1-2 weeks. • Wash well. Peel outer skin if desired. • Eat raw, juiced, lightly steamed or boiled – or use in stir-fries, soups, stews or casseroles.
• Fully grown 1½-2½ months after planting. • Cut leaves at any stage to promote new growth for continued harvest until plant flowers. • For extended harvest, start cutting outer leaves when plants are about 8" tall (new leaves will grow out from the center). • Produces well for a year or more.	• Refrigerate in a plastic bag; use within 5 days. • Wash well to remove sand and grit. • Slice young greens and stalks in raw salads. Or briefly steam or stir-fry leaves and stalks with other vegetables. • Overcooking destroys nutrients. • Add vinegar or lemon juice near the end of cooking time to avoid bitterness. • If eating raw, pick leaves young for easier digestion.
• Leaves may be picked anytime. • Once flowers develop, the leaves lose their rich flavor, but the seeds can be dried and used as a cooking spice (coriander).	• Refrigerate. Highly perishable. Store in a plastic bag and use within 4 days. • To last longer in the refrigerator, keep the roots attached and store in a cup of water with a plastic bag covering the leaves. • To prepare, remove leaves from stems. • Great in salsas, soups or salads.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Collard Greens

Very good source of Calcium & Vitamins A & C. In the cabbage family. Good for the skin.

Serving Size:
½ cup cooked

- Plant March-April and again July-September.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 3" apart.
- When 3-4" tall, thin to 12" between plants.
- For a constant supply, plant new seeds every 2-4 weeks.

Cucumbers

Contains Vitamins A & C.

Serving Size:
1/3 medium cucumber

- Plant May-June.
- Start seeds indoors in gallon containers.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1 plant per 2-5 gallon container.
- Transplant seedlings outdoors after 3 weeks.
- If planting directly outside, place 2-3 seeds per ½" deep hole. Space seed piles 1-2" apart.

Dill

Believed to aid digestion.

Serving Size:
1 teaspoon fresh

- Plant seeds from spring to early summer.
- Sow directly in garden in an area protected from wind after danger of frost has passed. Grows well in pots.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1" apart.
- When plants are 2" high, thin to 6" apart. Transplant the thinned plants.
- Seeds will begin to grow 2 weeks after planting.

BEST TIME TO EAT	STORAGE & EATING TIPS
• Ready to pick 1½-2½ months after planting, when leaves are young and full with rich green color. • To prolong harvest, pick individual leaves without cutting entire plant.	• Refrigerate. Use promptly. • Wash leaves under running water to clean off sand and grit. • Remove central stem and discard unless very young. • Use young leaves raw in salads. • Lightly steam – or use in soups, stir-fries and casseroles to increase a meal's nutritional value.
• Harvest when firm, well shaped, and medium or dark green in color. • Flesh should be firm with small, immature seeds.	• Refrigerate. • Eat raw in salads, with dips or sliced in yogurt and lemon juice. • Can be juiced after removing skin to add a cooling flavor to other juices.
• Ready to eat about 2 months after planting seeds. • Leaves can be picked any time before flowers develop. • Seeds can be dried and used as well.	• Best to refrigerate. Can be used immediately or dried for later use. • To keep fresh for several weeks, trim the roots, put in a small jar with enough water to just cover the bottoms, and place a plastic bag loosely over the tops. • To dry, hang upside down in a dark, dry location for several days until all moisture is gone. Store in an airtight container for up to 6 months. Goes well with seafood.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Garlic

Great source of Selenium & Vitamin C. Used as an antibiotic & immune system booster.

Serving Size:
2 cloves

- Plant cloves in the fall and/or February.
- Break each bulb into individual cloves and plant cloves pointed side up, twice as deep as they are big, 3-4” apart.

Green Onions

Good source of Potassium, Vitamin C & Folic Acid.

Serving Size:
1 tablespoon

- Plant in early spring after last frost.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1-2” apart.
- For a constant supply, plant every 3-4 weeks.
- Grow rapidly in cool temperatures.

Kale

Good source of Vitamins A & C, Potassium & Calcium. Good for the skin.

Serving Size:
½ cup cooked

- Plant March-April and July-September.
- Plants do best in relatively moist fertile soil and during the cooler part of the growing season.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 3” apart.
- Thin when plants are 3-4” tall, 12” apart. For a constant supply, plant every 3-4 weeks.

BEST TIME TO EAT

- Ready to pick about 9 months after planting.
- Cut off seed heads as they start to form on top of the long stalks.
- When leaves begin to die back, dig or carefully pull up bulbs.
- Dry bulbs in a warm area but out of sunlight.

STORAGE & EATING TIPS

- Store in a dark, dry, slightly warm place.
- Garlic's uses are almost unlimited!
- Chop, slice or press.
- Use in soups, stir-fries, sauces, dressings and marinades.
- Roast and eat cloves whole.

- Pick any time before leaves begin to dry out.
- Pull roots up with leaves.
- Both the white and green parts can be eaten.

- Refrigerate in a plastic bag. Use within 4-5 days, before the greens wilt. (Will not store as long as yellow onions.)
- Serve raw in salads and sauces, or sprinkle over a meal.
- Often added raw to miso soup.
- Also known as scallions and bunching onions.

- Fully grown 6-10 weeks after planting.
- Cut leaves at any stage to promote new plant growth for continued harvest until plant flowers.
- For extended harvest, start cutting outer leaves when plants are about 8" (new leaves will grow from the center).
- Produces well for a year or more – or until the plant flowers.

- Refrigerate. Store in a plastic bag and use within 4 days.
- Wash well to remove sand and grit.
- Eat raw in salads or briefly steam/stir-fry with other vegetables.
- Overcooking destroys nutrients. When done, kale is slightly sweet with tender leaves.
- If eating raw, pick leaves young for easier digestion.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Leeks

Good source of Folic Acid, Iron & Potassium. Said to aid digestion.

Serving Size:
¼ cup

- Plant April to early May.
- Grow best in cooler temperatures. Can start indoors and transplant outdoors after last frost.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 2” apart.
- Keep soil damp.

Lettuce

Good source of Folic Acid, Vitamin A & Fiber. Believed to stimulate the appetite.

Serving Size:
1 cup raw

- Plant March-May or September-October.
- Likes cool weather.
- Scatter seeds and cover with ¼” fine soil.
- When 4” tall, thin plants to 6-10” apart.
- Seeds sprout 1-2 weeks after planting.
- Keep soil moderately moist.
- Easy to grow. Plant more seeds every few weeks for constant supply.

Mustard Greens

Good source of Vitamins C & A, Iron & Potassium. Good for the skin; believed to stimulate the appetite.

Serving Size:
½ cup raw

- Plant March-April and July-September.
- Grow best during the cooler parts of the growing season but can handle some heat.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 3” apart.
- Seeds sprout 1-2 weeks after planting. Keep soil moderately moist during germination.
- Gradually thin plants to 6-10” apart.
- Prefer fairly rich, moist, well-drained soil.

BEST TIME TO EAT

- May be harvested at any time, but best when stems are between ½ and 1½" in diameter.

STORAGE & EATING TIPS

- Refrigerate in a plastic bag. They keep well, but use before they get limp.
- Best used in soups, broths, stir-fries and some juice combinations.
- Excellent (milder) replacement for onion.

- Fully matures 2-2½ months after planting.
- Individual leaves can be cut at any stage. Continue picking as leaves grow.
- The darker outer leaves are much more nutrient-rich than the pale inner leaves.

- Refrigerate. For best storage freshness, keep in a sealed container or plastic bag lined with paper or cloth towels. Use within 3-5 days.
- Don't cook! Wash well and pat or spin dry before using.
- Lettuce is almost always eaten raw in salads or on sandwiches. Add dressing just before using to prevent wilting.

- Plants mature 1½-2½ months after planting.
- Leaves can be picked at any size. Pick outer leaves when young for best flavor, leaving inner leaves to grow out.
- To prolong harvest, pick leaves without cutting entire plant.

- Refrigerate and store in a plastic bag. Best if used within 4 days.
- Leaves are mild flavored, smooth and dark green.
- Wash well to remove sand and grit.
- Best raw in salads or slightly cooked with other vegetables.
- Greens can be sautéed or added to stir-fries and soups.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Onions

Contains Potassium, Vitamin C, Folic Acid & Fiber. Boosts the immune system.

Serving Size:
½ medium

- Plant sets and seeds March-April before the last frost – or start indoors to allow for long growth period.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 2 seeds per inch, in rows 3” apart.
- When 3-5” tall, thin plants to 6” between bulbs. Replant thinned bulbs, or use as green onions.

Parsley

Good source of Vitamins C & A, Folic Acid & Potassium.

Serving Size:
1 tablespoon raw

- Plant February-May.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 4” apart, in rows 12” apart.
- Seeds start slow but sprout in 2-4 weeks.
- Grows well in pots or window boxes, but does not transplant well.

Peas

Good source of Folic Acid, Potassium, Magnesium & Protein (when dried). Also contains Vitamin C & Iron.

Serving Size:
½ cup

- Plant February-June.
- Soak seeds overnight before planting.
- Plant in a sunny area, 2-4” apart, twice as deep as they are big, in rows 1½-2’ apart.
- Seeds sprout 1-2 weeks after planting.
- Peas need lots of room to grow. To save space, use stakes or a trellis.
- Peas require little work while growing. Do not over water, and avoid watering mature leaves and pods.

BEST TIME TO EAT

- Bulbs mature about 3 months after planting.
- Pull bulbs up when long tops have fallen over and dried.
- Dry in warm area out of sun until neck is dry and skin is papery.

STORAGE & EATING TIPS

- Store in a burlap or paper bag in a cool and fairly dry place (basement or garage).
- Commonly used as a base flavor.
- Peel papery skin off and discard.
- Used in soups, stir-fries, casseroles, salads, sandwiches, etc.
- Chopped onions may cause eyes to water.

- Plant matures in about 2-3 months.
- Leaves can be picked at any stage but become more bitter once stems begin to elongate before flowering.
- Discard yellow or limp leaves.

- Refrigerate. Stores well.
- To last longer, trim ends, put in a small jar with enough water to just cover the ends, and place a plastic bag loosely over the tops.
- Use in salads, soups, casseroles, juices and as an edible decoration.

- Ready about 4 months after planting.
- Best picked when young, sweet, fresh and tender as their nutrient value and flavor is highest then.
- Pods should be bright green and filled out with well-developed (but not bulging) peas.

- Refrigerate. Best if used within 3-5 days.
- Eat raw or steamed, tightly covered, in minimal water.
- Avoid adding salt, which destroys greenness, food value and digestibility.
- Dried peas are a good source of protein, especially when eaten with a grain such as rice.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Peppers

Very good source of Vitamin C. Also contains Vitamin A & Potassium.

Serving Size:
½ medium pepper

- Plant indoors March-April. Move outdoors May-June.
- Best to start seeds indoors. Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big.
- After 1½-2 months, transplant outside.
- Needs heat to grow. Keep in 1-gallon containers and place against a south- or west-facing wall – or transplant to the warmest part of your garden.

Potatoes

Good source of Potassium. Also contains Vitamin C & Iron.

Serving Size:
1 medium potato

- Plant early spring to early summer.
- Loosen soil up to 1' deep before planting.
- Plant small potatoes whole, 1" deep. Or, you can cut large ones into block pieces (leaving 2-3 "eyes" on each piece), and leave them out to dry 1-2 days before planting.
- Plant in trench; as stems grow, add soil periodically to cover.

Pumpkins

Source of Vitamins A, C & Fiber.

Serving Size:
½ cup

- Plant May-June.
- Grow best in full sun and warm weather.
- Sow indoors 3 weeks before transplanting.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1 seed per 3-5 gallon container.
- To sow directly outside, plant seeds in mounds 2-4' apart.
- Water plants once a week in dry weather, but avoid watering directly onto mature leaves.

BEST TIME TO EAT	STORAGE & EATING TIPS
• Harvest when green and plump. • For a huge increase in Vitamin C and amazing sweetness, allow them to turn red or orange on the stalk.	• Refrigerate. Best eaten raw to maximize Vitamin C content. • Chop into salads, slice and eat with a dip, stuff and slightly bake, or use as a pizza topping.
• Dig up when the majority of tops have withered. • It's OK to dig early, from flowering time on, but it can disrupt the plant and slow future growth.	• Best to store mature potatoes in a cool, dry place out of light. (They lose nutrients as they soften or sprout.) • Remove any green spots before cooking or eating. • Best prepared unpeeled, and well but not overcooked. • To bake, poke a few steam holes in potatoes with a fork, then bake at 400° for 1-1 ½ hours.
• Will be heavy for its size when ripe, with a good bright orange color and a hard rind that's difficult to scratch.	• Cure warm and dry out of the sun, and store at 50° in moderate humidity. • Best baked or steamed. Eat plain, blend into soup, or use as pie filling. • Microwave for 5 minutes to soften enough to cut in half. Then, place each half face down on a baking sheet in ¼" of water. Bake at 350° until soft (about 45 minutes).

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Radishes

Great source of Vitamin C & Potassium. Also contains Folic Acid. Believed to prevent a variety of infections and aid digestion.

Serving Size:
7 radishes

- Plant February-September.
- Grows best in cool weather. Needs plenty of moisture to grow sweet, crisp and tender.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1-2” apart.
- Seeds will begin to grow in about 1 week.
- When plants are 1-2” high, thin to 2” apart.
- Easy and fast to grow. Plant seeds every 2-3 weeks for a constant supply.

Spinach

Great source of Vitamins A & C, Iron & B Vitamins. Good for the skin, prevents anemia and replenishes minerals.

Serving Size:
4 oz (½ cup cooked)

- Plant February-May and September.
- Can take more warmth than other greens, but grows best in cooler times of the season.
- Sprinkle seeds and cover with ½” of dirt.
- When 2-3” tall, thin to 3-4” apart.

Squash (winter)

High in Carbohydrates. Also contains Potassium & Vitamin A.

Serving Size:
½ medium squash (½ cup)

- Plant May-June.
- Does best in full sun and warm weather.
- Best to sow indoors 3 weeks before transplanting. Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1 seed per 3-5 gallon container.
- Plant seedlings in mounds 2-4’ apart.
- Water plants once a week in dry weather, directly on the soil. Avoid watering onto mature leaves.

BEST TIME TO EAT

- Fully grown about 4-5 weeks after planting.
- Pull when 1-1½" across (before plants flower or the roots get tough and crack).

STORAGE & EATING TIPS

- Refrigerate. Best if used within 2 weeks.
- Scrub and rinse well with cold water.
- Trim tops and bottoms. Do not peel.
- Radishes add zest and color to tossed salads.
- Eat raw with dips, or marinate in herbed vinegar for a great snack.

- Plant is fully grown about 1½-2 months after planting.
- Leaves may be picked at any stage and will promote new plant growth for continued harvest until the plant flowers.

- Refrigerate. Like lettuce, store in a plastic bag and use within 4 days.
- Wash well to remove sand and grit.
- Eat raw in salads or barely steamed.
- Also ideal as cooked greens and in egg dishes (such as omelets).
- 1 pound of fresh spinach cooks down to about 1 cup or 2 servings.

- Comes in many varieties (butternut, acorn, etc.).
- Has a hard rind or skin when ripe.

- Stores best in a cool, dry place like a basement or garage.
- Steam or bake and eat plain, in stews or in soups.

PLANT	NUTRIENTS	PLANTING TIPS

Tomatoes

Good source of Vitamins A, C & Potassium. Help cleanse the body of toxins.

Serving Size:
1 medium tomato (4 oz)

- Best to start indoors, April-May. Transfer plants outdoors May-June, 1-2' apart.
- Need heat to thrive!
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 1 plant per 2-3 gallon container.
- Avoid late blight disease by keeping foliage dry under house eaves or plastic tents.
- Stems need support for the heavy fruit. Use stakes as needed.

Turnip

Good source of Vitamin C & Potassium. Also contains Folic Acid.

Serving Size:
½ cup

- Plant outdoors as soon as soil is workable, in early spring or late summer, for fall harvest.
- The cooler parts of the growing season give them their best flavor and texture.
- Plant seeds twice as deep as they are big, 2-4" apart, in rows 12" apart.
- When 2-4" tall, thin to 4-6" apart.
- Easy to grow.

Zucchini & Summer Squash

Good source of Potassium, Vitamin C & Folic Acid.

Serving Size:
½ cup

- Plant May-June, after the last frost.
- Needs warm weather and grows best in full sun to partial shade.
- Place 3-4 seeds in a ½"-deep hole and cover with dirt. Leave 3-4' between seed piles.
- Zucchini and squash are vine plants that take up lots of room in the garden but produce lots of fruit.
- Water 1-2 times a week in dry weather, but avoid watering directly onto the leaves.

BEST TIME TO EAT	STORAGE & EATING TIPS
• Ripen about 4-6 months after planting. In the NW, they ripen from August to October – or until the first frost. • Let ripen on the vine and pick when fully red. (Some varieties are yellow, orange, black, etc.) • Can also be picked before fully ready and left out to ripen. For cherry varieties, cut vines with fruit still on them and hang up to let ripen.	• Refrigerate only if fully ripened. • Store at room temperature to help ripen. • Best eaten at room temperature. • Great sliced fresh in salads or on sandwiches, cooked in sauces or juiced along with other raw vegetables. • Green/unripe tomatoes are great lightly breaded and fried.
• Begin harvesting roots when turnips are about 3" across. • Greens can be picked individually – or you can pull up the whole plant.	• Refrigerate. Best if used within 1-2 weeks. • Wash well and peel. • ***Greens:*** Eat raw in salads or cook in stir-fries. • ***Roots:*** Excellent for storing, canning or freezing and can be eaten raw or cooked. • Slice or cube and cook in a small amount of water for 10-20 minutes.
• Usually ready when 4-6" long. • Ripe ***summer squash*** is heavy for its size, with a tender, easily scratched rind. • Pick ***zucchini*** when skins are dark green and still soft. • Often produces large amounts, so it's great to share with friends, neighbors or your local food bank. • You can also pick some of the flowers – they're edible (leave some on the vine so the plant can produce fruit).	• Refrigerate. Lasts 7-10 days, but best eaten fresh. • Can be eaten raw, in salads or cooked. • Steam, stir-fry or grate into soups or sauces. • Larger zucchini tends to have less flavor, but it's great in soups or baked into breads and muffins. • Flowers are good stuffed with cheese, then fried or baked.

GARDENING RESOURCES

In the Seattle Area

- **Seattle's P-Patch** program periodically offers free classes on organic gardening.

  Call: 206.684.0264 | p-patch.don@Seattle.gov

- **Seattle Tilth's Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline** can answer specific garden-related questions.

  Call: 206.633.0224 | **Email:** help@gardenhotline.org

- **The City of Seattle's Website** lists local resources to help you compost.

  www.seattle.gov/util/EnvironmentConservation/MyLawnGarden/FoodGardening

SOURCES FOR THIS BOOKLET

This guide was written and edited by volunteers and staff of Solid Ground's Lettuce Link program – including master gardeners and professional nutritionists.

For additional copies, contact:

Lettuce Link Program Coordinator
Call: 206.694.6746
lettucelink@solid-ground.org

Sources Include:

- **Interbay P-Patch** (15th Avenue W & W Armour Street)
  www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/p-patch-community-gardening/p-patch-list/interbay
- **GreenUP**
  www.greenup.on.ca
- **Journey to Forever**
  www.journeytoforever.org
- **LEAD International**
  www.lead.org
- **Seattle Public Utilities**
  www.seattle.gov/util/EnvironmentConservation/MyLawnGarden/FoodGardening

At Solid Ground, we work passionately to end poverty and build a more equitable community.

Our services support people experiencing poverty by helping them achieve stability and expand their skills to realize their dreams.

And that's just where our work begins!

In addition to providing immediate services, we organize people, especially those most impacted by poverty, to participate in advocacy that makes our region more just for all.

Interpretation services & reasonable accommodations for disabilities available on request.

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Building community to end poverty

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