

Spinach

"The answer isn't another pill. The answer is spinach." Bill Maher

Spinach leads the list of superfoods. It is loaded with nutrients in a low-calorie package.

Benefits and nutritional information:

- Dark, leafy greens like spinach are important for skin, hair, and bone health.
- It provides vitamins — especially vitamins A, B, C and K
- and minerals including iron, calcium, magnesium and potassium.

Starting

- Prior to planting spinach it's best to add a layer of compost to the soil and loosen the soil to a depth of several inches to allow the plant to develop its characteristic tap root.
- Spinach is started from seeds.
- Sow seeds 1/2" deep, spaced 1" apart in rows 12" apart.
- To jump-start seedlings, there is a presoaking process known as "priming." It involves a bit of work, but could be worth a try: <https://www.growveg.com/guides/getting-a-good-stand-of-garden-spinach/>



When to plant:

- As a cool weather crop, spinach can be planted in the spring or the fall.
- Spinach seeds will have a 70% germination rate with a soil temperature of 45 degrees. The optimal temperature for germination is 70 degrees; however, by that time warm weather has begun and spinach does not yield good crops when it's too warm.
- Spinach will tolerate temperatures down to 28 degrees Fahrenheit, so early spring starting — before the insect pests become active — can yield good results.
- For a steady harvest over several weeks, you can plant a new crop every 10 days. These succession plantings can be continued until it's time for summer crops to go in.

Thinning, training

- Thin seedlings to 3" to 6" spacing. It's best to do thinning in several stages in order to retain the most vigorous plants.

Signs of over-watering, nutrient deficiency

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- Slow, stunted growth is either a sign of excessively wet or compacted soil, or soil that is deficient in nitrogen.
- Spinach consumes a good amount of water to grow but at the same time needs to be in well-drained soil

Pests and pest controls

- **Damping off** and other fungal diseases that kill off seedlings
- **Slugs** nip young plants off just above the soil line or they cut semi-circular holes in the leaves of more mature plants. Slugs betray their presence by leaving glistening trails of slime across the soil surface.
- **Leaf miners** leave winding tunnels inside the leaves, making the crop inedible.
- **Cutworms, cabbage loopers** also munch holes in plant leaves but don't leave slime trails like slugs.
- **Flea beetles** give leaves the appearance of having been peppered with small shotgun pellets.

Harvesting

- Spinach is one of the cut-and-come-again plants. New leaves will sprout to replace ones that have been harvested.
- Harvesting is finished when spinach "bolts" — sending up a flower stalk — at the onset of warmer weather. At this point the leaves become bitter.