

HOME HORTICULTURE

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Information Packet was Compiled from the Michigan State University Home Horticulture Database.

Lettuce

Two types of lettuce are commonly grown in home gardens, *L. s. var. capitata* is head lettuce and *L. s. var. crispa* is leaf lettuce. Romaine lettuce is *L. s. var. longifolia*. Lettuce is best in cool weather. Head lettuce may be more difficult to grow than leaf lettuce. Lettuce grows on almost any soil if it contains organic matter. Lettuce is ideally suited to muck and will not grow well in dry soil. Planting times depend on when the crop is desired. Early season crops are planted in late March to early April. If planted after April, the plants bolt. A late crop may be planted in late July through August. Plant seed 1/4-inch deep and 1/2-inch apart. Space leaf lettuce rows 12 to 18-inches apart with the plants 6-inches apart after thinning. Head lettuce rows are 18 to 24-inches apart with plants 8 to 15-inches apart. Head lettuce seed started indoors, takes 4 to 6 weeks to produce a suitable transplant. It may be desirable to sow seed at 10-day intervals to stagger yields. If the garden was not fertilized, use 3 cups 5-10-5 per 50 feet of row. Sidedress with the same amount of fertilizer 6 weeks after planting. Keep fertilizer 3-inches from the plant and wash off any that gets on the leaves. Thin 2-inch plants of lettuce to 2-inches apart then to final spacing when the plants look crowded. Watering is important for lettuce during dry weather. Good watering practices help insure crispness.

Harvest head lettuce when the heads are firm. Hard heads may be overmature. Pick leaf lettuce before the stem elongates by cutting or pulling off the outer leaves. The leaves are bitter and tough after the stem elongates.

Tipburn is the drying of the leaf edges and usually only head lettuce is affected. High temperatures are a factor. Use tipburn resistant varieties.

The ribs of some leaves turn brown possibly due to high temperatures.

Plants will form seedstalks in response to hot weather.

Lettuce Facts

Availability: mid June through mid September (field grown)

Days to Maturity: 40 to 50 days for leaf lettuce

70 to 75 days for head lettuce

Approximate Yield/10 feet of row: 5 pounds of leaves or 10 heads

Per Person Requirements: Fresh: 10 feet of row for head and leaf

Lettuce, Lettuce Insects

Six Spotted Leafhopper

This 1/8-inch, smoky-green insect with six spots on the front of its head is a carrier of aster yellows and is more of a problem on muck grown plants.

Aphids

The green peach aphid is light green and sucks out the plant juices causing the leaves to distort.

Cutworms

Variegated cutworm is variable in color but has buff stripes down the sides with yellow or orange spots along the back. The main injury is feeding on the leaves.

Loopers

Loopers are light green worms that hump up in the middle as they crawl. They have a light stripe down the back and sides and feed on the foliage.

Lettuce Disease

Drop

Symptoms are wilting of outer leaves, a watery soft rot on stems and old leaves, and wilted and decayed plants. The disease is worse in moist weather.

Yellows

The inner leaves of infected plants are yellowed, distorted and bleached. The disease is spread by leafhoppers and plants infected when young often die.