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How to grow spinach

Sown now, you can enjoy the fresh leaves of this easy-to-grow and versatile vegetable right through to winter.



Better Homes and Gardens



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Spinach is one of those vegetables that holds bad memories for many people – perhaps because as children they were force-fed overcooked portions! But it's a tasty, versatile and leafy vegetable that can be enjoyed raw or lightly cooked, on its own, delicately seasoned or added to a host of dishes.

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Homegrown spinach has a tender succulence (often with a slight buttery taste) that sets it apart from bagged supermarket offerings that can be tough and soon start to deteriorate in the bag. A salad is made all the better with the addition of baby spinach leaves, harvested when young and tender. Freshly harvested spinach makes a great last-minute addition to a stir-fry or a delicious vegetable dish when combined with lightly fried garlic and a dash of freshly ground black pepper. With ricotta and herbs, it's a classic filling for cannelloni. Choose some of the red-veined varieties to add more colour to your plate.



(Credit: Getty) (Credit: Getty)

How to grow spinach

Aspect

Sunny or part-shaded position.

Climate

Suitable for all climatic zones.



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Soil

Rich and heavy soil. Improve the soil texture by incorporating bulky organic matter, such as garden compost or well-rotted manure, to boost the plants' growth rate and cropping, while reducing the chances of bolting.

Water

Water regularly, especially if weather is dry.

Pests

Protect spinach plants from slugs and snails by making mulch barriers at the base of young plants. Alternatively, apply a nematode-based biological control after sowing.

Mulch

You can mulch with either sugar-cane mulch or pea straw when the plants have grown to around 3-5cm tall.

Easy steps to superb spinach

1. Choose a sunny or part-shaded spot and fork in some well-rotted manure. Sow the seed along a prewetted drill, 1.5-2cm deep, 30cm between rows. Cover and water so the soil is just moist.
2. Thin out the seedlings at regular intervals, removing the more congested and weaker plants, to a final spacing of about 15cm.
3. After thinning, water well to resettle the soil around the roots. Keeping the soil moist not only decreases the risk of plants bolting, but produces more tender, succulent leaves.
4. Spinach is ready to harvest 6-10 weeks after sowing, and growth is quickest during warmer weather. Use a sharp knife to avoid pulling the plants and loosening them in the ground.

What are the best tips for growing spinach?

- Strawberries, peas and beans are great companion plants to grow with spinach. The peas and beans are ideal as they provide shade for the growing leaves.
- Choose a sheltered spot with moisture-retentive soil, and try to avoid hotter and drier sites as these conditions will increase the risk of the plants bolting and running to seed.
- Sow spinach in punnets for planting out when 5-8cm tall, if you prefer not to direct sow.
- Create temporary shade if weather conditions turn very hot to reduce the risk of bolting and to produce a more tender leaf, growth may be slower and harvest times will take a little longer.
- Keep in mind that in the extreme cold, growth may be slow.

What season does spinach grow in Australia?

Spinach certainly has versatility, but the best thing is that it's also easy to grow, thriving in a fertile, moist spot, and with a bit of protection, producing later harvests for you to enjoy into the winter months. You can sow from early spring onwards for a succession of harvests, however, it's prone to bolting in hot weather. Sow in autumn, as the lower temperatures and higher soil moisture will mean you get more leaves before it flowers.

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