

Arugula *Eruca vesicaria*

Also called Rocket, arugula has a nutty/peppery taste that adds zest to salads. It is easy to grow, has a long growing season, and regrows repeatedly after cutting.

TIP – Remember to buy enough seed for successive sowings.

Location and soil Grow arugula in full sun in cool weather, and light shade in the heat of summer. It produces best in rich, humusy soil.

When to plant Sow seed directly into the garden as early as the soil can be worked. In hot summer areas arugula will thrive throughout spring and early summer, and again in late summer into early fall. For a continuous harvest plant successive crops at 2- to 3-week intervals. Speediest germination occurs when soil temperature is between 45° and 70°F.

Seed depth and spacing For a crop that can be continuously harvested, scatter the small round seeds about an inch apart in 4- to 6-inch wide rows, leaving about 10 inches between rows. Cover the seeds lightly with a scant 1/8- to 1/4-inch of soil and gently pat the soil down for good soil to seed contact. Keep the rows evenly moist for fast germination.

A New Discovery

Arugula was virtually unknown in American cuisine until the 1990s. It has been a popular seasoning leaf in the Mediterranean region for centuries, and oil extracted from its seeds was considered an aphrodisiac in Roman times. Once it was discovered by “foodies” arugula transitioned from gourmet vegetable to garden favorite very quickly, due to its easy-growing habit and distinctive flavor.

Germination Seed will sprout in 4 to 7 days.

Thinning Thinning is not strictly necessary, though pulling (and eating) seedlings so that remaining plants are about 4 to 6 inches apart will produce more robust leaves.

Care Water regularly and cut continuously. Arugula bolts quickly when daytime temperatures begin to exceed 80°F. To extend the harvest, keep your plants stress-free by providing even moisture and covering with shade cloth on hot days. When flowers appear, it's time to pull the plants.

Pests Flea beetles, which produce numerous small holes in young leaves, are arugula's main problem in many parts of the country. Cover plants with row cover to exclude the pest. If flea beetle damage becomes severe, delay successive plantings until the pest pressure subsides in late summer.

Fertilize Fertilize with an all-purpose vegetable food or organic kelp fertilizer at the time of planting. Additional applications of kelp each time the plants are cut will promote healthy regeneration.

Harvest Cut greens when they are 4 to 6 inches high, making sure to leave the growing tips intact to allow plants to produce new leaves. Depending on growing conditions, arugula can be harvested as frequently as every 10 days. When it begins to bolt, harvest the entire plant.

Nutrition Arugula is high in vitamins A and K, and also folate. It is a good source of zinc, potassium, calcium, and iron.



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