

Home Gardening Series

Mustard Greens

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Vegetables

Environment

Light – sunny

Soil – well drained, deep

Fertility – medium-rich

pH – 6.0 to 7.0

Temperature – cool

Moisture – average

Culture

Planting – direct seed, spring or fall

Spacing – 2-6 x 24 inches, thin

Hardiness – cool-season biennial

Fertilizer – medium

Mustard Greens – *Brassica juncea*

Mustard greens originated either in Europe and Siberia or in northwest India. The word *mustard* is derived from the Latin term *must*, which refers to the fresh juice or crushed pulp of grapes or other fruit with which the ground seeds of mustard were mixed for use as a condiment.

Mustard greens (also known as mustard spinach, leaf mustard and white mustard) are quick-maturing, easy-to-grow, cool-season vegetables that are commonly used cooked and as salad greens. Although mustard is grown primarily in the Deep South, it is also adapted to most states in the North. Mustard greens are high in vitamins A and C.



Cultural Practices

Planting Time

Plant early in the late winter (three weeks before the frost-free date) and again three weeks later. Plant in mid- to late summer for fall harvest. The later plantings are usually the best under Arkansas conditions.

Prepare the soil by broadcasting and working in one pound of a complete fertilizer, such as 13-13-13, per 100 square feet of bed. Mustard is a cool-season plant and will germinate anytime soil temperatures are above 45 degrees F. Mid- to late summer plantings should be made in soils that are high in organic matter and will remain moist, or high soil temperatures will inhibit germination. Mustard can be either direct seeded or grown from transplants.

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Cultivars

Crop	Cultivar	Days to Maturity	Seed Per 100 Feet of Row	Remarks
Mustard greens	Southern Giant Curled	50	1/2 ounce	Large, bright green leaves with margins, slow bolting, good yield and quality.
	Tendergreen	40	1/2 ounce	Large, broad, dark green leaves with smooth edges.
	Savannah Hybrid	35	1/2 ounce	Early-maturing, tendergreen type, slower to bolt, smooth, dark green leaves, multiple harvests.
	Florida Broadleaf	45	1/2 ounce	Mild-flavored, large, broad green leaves.
	Red Giant	45, 75	1/2 ounce	Fast-maturing, savoyed, dark red leaves with light green undersides.

Spacing and Depth of Planting

Sow seed 1/2 inch deep, and thin seedlings to 2 to 4 inches between plants in rows 16 to 24 inches apart.

Care

Mustard grows rapidly. Fertilize and water during dry periods.

Harvesting

Harvest the leaves when young and tender. Do not use wilted or yellowed leaves. You can cut the entire plant or pick off individual leaves as they grow. The leaf texture becomes tough and the flavor strong in the summer.

Common Problems

Aphids, cabbage worms and flea beetles.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What causes flowers to develop on my spring mustard?

- A. Mustard is a cool-season vegetable that naturally flowers during the long, warm days of summer. Pull the spring planting when hot weather arrives and before flower stalks develop.

Q. Why do mustard greens sometimes have a strong, bitter flavor?

- A. Mustard greens should mature under cool temperatures to produce high-quality, tasty leaves. Conditions such as high temperature, low moisture, low fertility or general poor growing conditions often cause an off-flavor.

Q. What do I do about the green worms feeding on my mustard?

- A. Several kinds of larvae feed on mustard. Most can be controlled with an insecticide. If the larvae move with a “looping” action, you probably have cabbage loopers and should use *Bacillus thuringiensis* to control this pest.