The Easiest Way to Grow Lettuce from Seed

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The easiest way to grow lettuce from seed is a simple method anyone can do. Lettuce can be grown anywhere that you have space for a pot so even in an apartment you can have a supply of fresh lettuce to pick from without leaving your home.

Tools and Materials Needed

Small Seedling Trays or Used Egg Cartons
Seed Raising Mix or Make Your Own from Potting Mix
Lettuce Seeds
Water Spritzer
Tray or Pot Base

For Apartments – Rectangular pots that have a water basin, potting mix and liquid fertiliser

For Home Gardens – Well matured manure, shovel, liquid fertiliser and shade cloth in hot climates.

Method

First fill the seedling trays or egg cartons with seed raising mix. If you are planning on growing your lettuce in a pot then fill ¾ full with potting mix then put a layer of seed raising mix on top.

Set the trays or egg cartons on a tray or pot base that will hold any excess water. Water the soil well then sprinkle the lettuce seeds over the top.

Sprinkle more seed raising mix over the seeds so they are just covered then lightly spritz the top with water.

Set trays in a warm well-lit area. You can cover the top with plastic wrap to create a humid environment. They will germinate quicker this way, especially in cooler conditions but it isn’t necessary to use the plastic.

Cos lettuce is one of the easiest lettuce varieties to grow. The seedlings will emerge in 10 to 14 days but during the warmer months they can emerge in just a few days.

Keep the top of the soil moist until the seeds have germinated. Thin out once the seedlings have their second leaves.

Growing Lettuce in the Garden

Growing lettuce in the garden is easy. Transplant seedlings to their final position when about 5 cm (2 inches) tall. Plant in a sunny position in cooler climates and a shady position during the warmer months.
Lettuce will grow more successfully in a shade house in hot climates but if you have heat waves during the middle of the summer the lettuce can be tough and bitter no matter how much you water it.

Prepare the soil by adding well-rotted manure. If the soil is poor add potting mix to improve the soil structure

Plant 20 cm (8 inches) apart then sprinkle snail pellets around the plants. Keep moist for the first week.

Growing Lettuce in Apartments

If you are growing lettuce in an apartment, thin out your seedlings so they are spaced about 15 cm (6 inches) apart in your pot. The lettuce won’t be as full by spacing them closer than the recommended 20 cm (8 inches) but you will fit more per pot.

Sit your pots in a warm area that gets a reasonable amount of sunlight and has good ventilation. If it is a hot day you may need to move them to a cooler part of your apartment.

Caring for Your Lettuce Plants

Water regularly and apply liquid fertiliser every two weeks.

Lettuce will be ready to harvest in about 8 weeks from planting. It is a good idea to plant more seeds every two weeks to have a steady supply.

Snails and slugs are the main pests when planting lettuce outside. Snail pellets are the most effective but if you want to go the organic route you will need a barrier around the plants that the snails and slugs can’t cross.

Try using crushed eggshells, wood ash or sharp grit. A fence of thin metal with the top edge bent over towards the outside will prevent the snails from climbing over. It will need to be about 30 cm (12 inches) above the ground.