

Microgreens at Home: A Step-by-step Guide

PREPARATION & PLANTING

Gather Materials

You can grow microgreens in a variety of containers. Get creative and use what you have on hand!

- Shallow container with a lid (recycled berry containers work really well)
- Growing medium (potting soil or a soilless mix works well)
- Untreated seeds (preferably specific to microgreen growing)
- A sunny space indoors
- Scissors

Prepare the Container

You can use anything that is shallow and will not break down when wet. Upcycle your take out or berry containers, or look for a microgreen growing trays at a local nursery.

- Ideally, containers will be 1-3 inches deep and have drainage holes in the bottom. You'll also need a lid or a shallow dish to place under the container for bottom watering (see *Caring for Your Microgreens* section below .
- Recycling containers: If you have a plastic container without holes in the bottom, use scissors or the tip of a kitchen knife to gently poke holes in the bottom. Be careful to point the tip of the blade away for you as you make holes.

Select Your Seeds

Many, but not all, seeds can be grown and consumed as microgreens. Below is a table of easy to grow microgreens from Mark Mathew Braunstein's book *Microgreen Garden: An Indoor Grower's Guide to Gourmet Greens*.

	Microgreen	Characteristics	Taste and Appearance
1.	Napa Cabbage	Grows quickly and easily	Beautiful and flavorful
2.	Radish, red and daikon	Grows quickly and easily	Tastes like the root vegetable
3.	Turnip	Grows quickly and easily	Leaf varieties taste like the root vegetable
4.	Bok choy	Grows quickly and easily	Many different varieties vary in taste and color
5.	Sesame (choose buff or beige, not black)	Germinates rapidly	Tastes better when cooked (a rare exception)
6.	Cress	Grows quickly	Very spicy hot; best eaten sparingly as a condiment
7.	Lettuce, most varieties	Fragile upon harvest	Beautiful and delectable
8.	Asian greens (especially Komatsuna)	Tolerates both heat and cold	Has a mild mustard flavor
9.	Endive	Grows easily but slowly	Beautiful bouquet of leaves
10.	Mustard and many mustard greens	Grows quickly and easily	Very spicy hot; best eaten sparingly as a condiment

- It's best to start with small quantities of seeds, that way you can learn what grows best for you and what you like to eat. Once you've decided on the varieties you'd like to grow more frequently, purchase seeds in bulk to help reduce cost
- Purchase untreated seeds since you'll be eating the plants soon after they sprout. This will reduce the risk of consuming harmful chemicals. Organic or naturally grown seeds are preferable, but not essential.
- Consider soaking larger seeds prior to planting. This will encourage a faster germination.

Prepare Your Growing Medium

Growing medium is what we'll grow our microgreens in! For most plants, this is soil - for microgreens, it's a mix that includes soil.

- Since we'll be harvesting these plants so young, it's ideal to use either a sterile potting soil or germination mix. These are usually more porous than topsoil and are less prone to harden when spread in a shallow layer.
- A sterile mix helps prevent any soil-borne disease from damaging the seedlings. If your only option is soil from your yard or garden, bake it at 212 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 30 minutes.
- You can make your own or get a pre-mixed bag from a local nursery or hardware store.

Plant Your Seeds!

Place some newspaper or an old towel on the floor or table and get ready to plant your microgreens.

- Fill your chosen container with the growing medium. The growing medium should nearly reach the top of the container.
- Dampen, but do not soak the growing medium. It should have the dampness of a wrung-out sponge. You may find this is easier to do before adding it to your container.
- Sow your chosen seeds in a single, complete layer. Most of the growing medium should be covered with seeds.
- Very gently press the seeds into the growing medium.
- Cover the seeds with a thin ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch) layer of soil and damp towel or paper towels. This will help keep the seeds moist until they germinate. Seeds don't need direct sunlight to germinate, but they do need to be warm and damp. Once the seeds start to grow, remove the towel and allow the small plants to grow.
- Find a sunny windowsill or table to place your microgreens. I like to keep mine in the kitchen, that way I don't forget to water them.
- Seeds need to stay warm and damp to germinate, and small seedlings need at least 6 hours of sunlight each day to grow.

CARING FOR YOUR MICROGREENS

Watering

Consistent water is essential for microgreen production. We aim to water the soil, so top watering is not an option.

- Use filtered water. Chlorinated tap water can cause yellowing of your microgreens. Don't have a filter? Fill a large mouthed jar or pitcher with tap water and let it sit on the counter for 24 hours. The chlorine will evaporate.
- Water from the bottom or side of the container, not the top.
- Bottom watering: This is ideal for microgreens, it ensures that the seedlings get the water they need without damaging them. Place a shallow tray beneath your microgreen container and pour a little water in the bottom tray. Make sure that the water reaches the holes in the bottom of your container. Allow the microgreens to sit in the water for at least 10 minutes to soak up the water, then dump the excess into the sink or outside. Replace the tray beneath the microgreens. Do this as often as the soil dries out.
- Side watering: With this method, you'll water your microgreens from one side of the container with a gentle stream of water. It's easiest to bring your microgreens to the sink and hold the container at a slight angle. Using a very gentle stream of water, water all around the edges of the container, close to the soil. Do not water on top of

the seedlings, this can damage them. Leave the container in the sink for 5-10 minutes to allow the excess water to drain out, then place it back in the sun. Do this once daily or as the soil feels dry.

After Germination

Seeds will germinate (sprout) 2-7 days after planting.

- After the majority of the seeds germinate, remove the damp towel from the surface. Seedlings need light to photosynthesize!
- Now it's important to monitor your microgreens daily, ensure the growing medium (soil) stays moist, but not soaked and they are getting enough sun.

Harvest

Most seedlings will be ready to harvest in 7-14 days. They're ready when the first set of 'true leaves' begin to grow.

- If you're using a smaller container, you'll likely want to harvest all of the microgreens at once. Grab your microgreens and hold your container at a slight angle above a large bowl or dish. Trim the stems of the greens and allow them to fall into the dish.
- Cut above the soil, keeping the harvested microgreens clean. Most microgreens are very fragile, so it's better to avoid washing them if possible. If you've watered and harvested, washing shouldn't be necessary.
- Only if necessary, wash the greens. Microgreens are very delicate, so take care to use a gentle stream of water when washing. Avoid vigorous shaking or patting to dry them.

Enjoy!

Microgreens are a great addition to salads, atop pizza, or even as an afternoon snack.

- Microgreens can be refrigerated in a glass or food-safe plastic container with a lid for up to a week. If you plan to store your greens it is imperative that you're very gentle when harvesting. Bruising them prior to storing will shorten their shelf life.

Clean Up

This is the key to successful microgreen production!

- Repurpose the growing medium. The remaining roots will break down and add organic matter to your garden beds or compost.
- Clean your containers thoroughly. Rinse away any remnants of soil or plant material and set the containers in the sun to dry. The sun will help disinfect the surfaces before planting another crop of microgreens.