

What is so great about the coming of cool days and chilly nights? Any gardener will tell you that there will be plenty of greens in the garden and lettuce in the salad bowl. Not only are leafy greens easy to grow in the fall, but they are very nutritious. Many varieties are so attractive that you may want to grow some for a quick and pretty container plant.

Lettuce can be divided into three basic groups based on growth habits. The looseleaf type is probably the easiest to grow and may be the one to try if you are new at gardening. You can begin to harvest in just 40 days after planting. This lettuce is harvested by cropping, or removing only the largest leaves. The plant will continue to grow and produce more leaves.

Another growth habit is the semi-heading types such as butterhead and romaine lettuce. These are more delicate to ship, so they are expensive in the store. The good news is they are fairly easy to grow. They can be harvested by cropping or by cutting the entire loose head. Plant some of the red and green ruffled varieties in a container and enjoy the leaves in two ways.

The crisphead lettuces, such as iceberg lettuce, are much more difficult to grow. They should only be attempted during our coolest months. Normally, they are not recommended for the home garden.

Transplants can be purchased, but you'll find a much larger selection of seeds. The planting bed should be worked and amended with compost and fertilizer. Lettuce seeds need light to germinate, so gently pat or rake them lightly into the soil. Water frequently until they germinate, and thin seedlings to about 10 inches.

Turnips are a fast growing crop that is grown for the tops and for the roots. Plant the seeds more thickly than needed and use the extra plants as you thin them out. The plants left to grow should be about six inches apart. 'Purple Top White Globe' is the leading turnip variety.

Grow your salad in a floating garden this fall. Learn how at the UF Extension workshop on Tues, Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. This Hydroponics class is free, but call to reserves your seat. 752-5384  
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