

Microgreens; Why Not?

If you're like me, you're missing all that time spent growing nutritious food for your family. Well, I've found an easy way to do something about it: growing microgreens. It can be done under grow lights, or on a sunny, southern-exposure windowsill. It's so easy, you won't believe how much nutritious food you can grow in just 7-14 days. Keep a good rotation schedule going, and you'll always have some on hand.

Here's how to get started: I soak my seeds overnight to speed-up the germination process. Just rinse them off and get ready to plant. Grab some organic garden or potting soil and some sort of receptacle, like an old takeout dish, or a glass or metal container of whatever size you need.

Measure your windowsill so that you don't fill containers that won't fit. But if you're using grow lights, go for some bigger containers. I use terracotta pots and rectangular glass dishes under my lights.

Next, put about an inch of soil in your container and add water to make a moist, but not wet, soil. Sprinkle your seeds of choice (never anything from the nightshade family, like tomatoes, potatoes, peppers or eggplants), using a lot more seeds than you would when planting in your garden. I pretty much cover the soil with seeds.

Using the palms of your hands, lightly press the seeds down on their bed of soil. They don't need to be buried. Sprinkle about a 1/4-1/2" of soil over the seeds, or just leave them exposed. Covering them with a small amount of soil will cut down on how often you have to mist them with water. Using a spray bottle, mist your seeds 2-3 times/ day, or whenever they look particularly dry.

It only takes a minute, but you don't want the seeds in mud-or drying out-so keep an eye on the conditions. You'll get it. Soon you'll see the seeds germinating and you'll know you've succeeded! The first set of leaves you'll see are called the cotyledons. Isn't that just a beautiful word? Check your seed package to see how long your germination should take. Different seeds germinate at different times. My sunflowers germinate in only 1-3 days, but my broccoli seeds take longer. Now all you have to do is keep your seeds moist and give them a sunny windowsill, or some time under grow lights. They're going to be leggy because they're growing so closely together. That's normal. Next, you're just going to wait for the second set of leaves to appear on your plants. These are called "true leaves".

When you see them, you've done it! You can leave them to grow a bit bigger for a day or two, or get a clean pair of scissors. It's time to harvest! Simply cut the microgreens about 1/2" above the soil. Rinse and eat. You can eat them raw or steam them with other vegetables, add them to an omelet or salad, the sky's the limit!

Here are some of the benefits:

- 1) It's so economical! You can grow microgreens for around 25 cents/pound.
- 2) Food doesn't come any fresher than microgreens because you're harvesting them in your own home!
- 3) Time Consumption: I spend about 2 minutes/day with my microgreens.
- 4) Flavor: I grow sunflower microgreens for their nutty flavor and crunchiness, and arugula for its spiciness. Please don't eat anything from the nightshade family (I know I already said this, but it bears repeating: no tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, potatoes, etc.). Simply google "good seeds for microgreens" and you'll find a plethora of ideas.
- 5) Great for the Environment: Microgreens from your home aren't sent in giant trucks from California or Florida, to our grocery stores, where we pick them up and drive them home. All that gas, all those emissions-all avoided!
- 6) Microgreens are packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.
- 7) No fertilizers, because everything your microgreens need is packed inside that little seed. Everything!

So, good luck and happy planting. Contact the office at the site listed for any questions.

Written by Bea Ultee