

'SPECIALLY SPINACH!

GARDENING SEASON

May to June and August to September

CHOOSING TIPS

- ◆ Choose leaves that are crisp and are dark green.
- ◆ Avoid those that are limp, damaged, or spotted.



STORAGE

After washing, thoroughly dry by using a salad spinner or blotting with paper towels. Wrap in dry paper towels and seal in a plastic bag for storage. Spinach is highly perishable and will not remain fresh for more than 1 weeks.

PREPARATION

One pound of fresh spinach equals about 1 cup of cooked spinach. Loose spinach can be very gritty straight from the garden, so it must be thoroughly rinsed. It grows in sandy soil that clings to the leaves.

KEY NUTRIENTS

Spinach is loaded with vitamins and minerals!

- ◆ Vitamin A for vision, healthy skin, and resistance to infection.
- ◆ Vitamin C for healthy gums, skin and blood.
- ◆ Calcium for strong bones.
- ◆ Magnesium for overall health.
- ◆ Folate to help prevent birth defects and
- ◆ reduce the risk of heart disease.
- ◆ Potassium to maintain normal blood pressure.
- ◆ Fiber to prevent constipation.



RECIPES

Sautéed Spinach Leaves

- $\frac{3}{4}$ pound fresh cleaned spinach leaves
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- Salt and pepper, to taste

In large nonstick pot over high heat add oil, spinach and nutmeg. Add salt and pepper, cook and toss quickly until spinach is wilted. Drain and serve hot.

Serves 2; 155 Cal; 14 g fat.

Skillet Lasagna

- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound ground beef, pork or turkey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped onion
- 1 15-ounce can tomato sauce
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon oregano and basil
- 3 cups uncooked noodles
- 1 pound fresh chopped spinach
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded mozzarella



Brown meat in a large skillet. Drain and rinse to remove some of the fat. Combine with onion, tomato sauce, water and spices. Cover and bring to boil. Add noodles, cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in spinach and simmer another 5 minutes. Stir and then spoon cottage cheese on top and sprinkle with shredded mozzarella. Cover and simmer for 10 more minutes. If mixture gets too dry, add a little more water. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Serves 4; 295 Cal; 12 g fat.

Growing Spinach in Wisconsin

Spinach is a member of the goosefoot family, *Chenopodiaceae*. This hardy, cool-season annual has leaves that are borne in a rosette with many leaves attached to a short fleshy stem. Leaves may be smooth or savory (crinkled). Savory types have a layer of cells that continue to grow between the leaf veins causing a puckering effect.



Spinach is one of the first crops that can be planted in the spring because it needs short days, can tolerate some frost, and grows best in cool temperatures from 55-65 degrees F. Under long warm days, spinach quickly bolts and stops producing large leaves.

Planting Spinach

- Planted from seed or transplants
- Start planting outdoors around April 15th through early May
- Plant a second group again in early August through early September for fall harvest
- Seed at 1/2 to 1 oz per 100 ft of row
- Seed at 1/2 to 3/4 inches deep
- Seeds are small so crusted soils will create emergence problems
- Thin plants to 1 1/4 apart in single rows
- 12 to 18 inches should be left between rows
- Plants will mature in 35-50 days



Soil and Fertility

Spinach can be planted fairly early in the spring so it is important to select a location where soil warms rapidly.

Soil and Fertility continued...

Growing leafy crops on muck soils reduces the amount of grit caught in crinkled leaves however excess soil moisture can increase disease problems. Since leaf greens are shallow rooted, it is important to plant in soils with better moisture holding capacity.

- Follow soil test recommendations
- Ideal pH is 6.0 to 7.5

Under optimum soil test levels apply...

3.7 oz of nitrogen per 100 sq ft

0.7 oz of phosphate per 100 sq ft

1.8 oz of potassium per 100 sq ft

Potential micronutrient deficiencies include boron, copper, molybdenum, and magnesium. "Tip burn" may be a sign of calcium deficiency under droughty conditions.

Selecting Spinach Varieties

Spinach varieties are selected for their vigor, uniformity, disease resistance, nutrition, and resistance to bolting. Spinach varieties may be upright or spreading. Varieties are grouped based on leaf texture: smooth or savory (crinkled).



Handling Your Spinach

Harvest once five to seven leaves have formed. New leaves will continue to grow. An average of 25 leaves per plant can be expected. A fresh taste will be retained if spinach is hydrocooled by submerging mesh bagfuls of the leaves in cool water several minutes immediately after harvest. Doing so will remove much of the dirt. Store at just above freezing in 85-95% relative humidity.