

Growing Nutritious Varieties



“When we stopped eating locally grown produce and abandoned our home gardens, we lost at least half the protective properties of our fruits and vegetables as well as much of their flavor”.

- *Jo Robinson author of Eating on the Wild Side*

Helpful tips to get started on growing nutrient dense foods

- Begin with healthy soil. Make sure your soil is full of organic matter, whether it be a starting mix that is a trustworthy source, or a mix you’ve created yourself. Compost heavily to get your plants off to a great start.
- Water, water, water! Not only should you ensure that your soil had good water absorption, make sure your plants are receiving quality, uncontaminated water.
- Pick a variety of colors - eating a rainbow of NATURAL colors is not only beautiful on the plate, it’s good for the body! Oranges, purples, and greens all contain different minerals and vitamins critical for the health and wellness of yourself and your family!



Why does timing matter?

Nutrients are lost as soon as vegetables are picked, and while the amount varies depending on type, on average, 30% of nutritional value is lost within three days after harvest. Food consumed within the US, on average, travels 1500 miles before consumption!

How can we maximize nutrient density? Grow your own, and purchase locally.

Spring varieties to try this year



Peas/Beans

General Rule: Most colorful will be most nutritious. Peas eaten with the pod offer most nutrition.

Varieties: Royal Burgundy: Purple, excellent flavor. Great for cool climates
Royalty Purple: Planted after the last frost. Needs a fence for climbing
Black Eyed Peas: Have 5x more antioxidants than green peas

Harvest: Peas / Beans are most nutritious cooked after being dried first. Freezing destroys 25% of nutrients, canning destroys 50% nutrients.

Lettuce

General Rule: The darker the better: Purple-Red-Dark Green. Loose leaves are better than tight, cabbage style. The more bitter, the better.

Varieties: Merlot: Very crisp and high in nutrients. Bold resistant
Rough D'hiver: Romaine head style, smooth and tall. Tolerates cool temps
Red Galactica: Very dark, bitter leaves. Slow to bolt, great as baby greens

Harvest: Separate leaves immediately after brought home. Soak in cold water for 10 minutes. Spin dry. Place in a plastic bag that has been poked 10/15 time with a pin. Eat within a few days.

Get an early start, but not too early

Cool crops need colder climates to thrive and germinate, but the temperature is a tricky balance between 40-55 degrees (for most col hardy seeds). But lack of germination can be a result of a poor early harvest. In addition, there's always the danger of a late frost in this climate, so plan ahead. Make sure you have a bed sheet or clear tarp for cold nights to protect new seedlings.

Summer varieties to try this year



Carrots

General Rule: The darker color the better: Purple, Red, Orange

Varieties: Cosmic Purple: Spicy and sweet, great for slicing and juicing. High in nutrients.
Purple Dragon: Mild flavor, 10x more antioxidants than most other varieties
Atomic Red: Cooking improves texture and flavor. High in lycopene.

Storage/Cooking; Can keep in a plastic storage bag for weeks. Most nutritious when steamed or sauteed whole with oil.

Tomatoes

General Rule: The darker the color, the more antioxidants. NEVER refrigerate to retain flavor and nutrients.

Cherry Varieties: Gardeners Delight: high yield and highest level of lycopene
Juliet: Crack/disease resistant. Holds onto vine when ripe. High yield.
Sweet 100 Plus (Lg cherry): Early harvest, High in Vit.C

Slicing/Plum Varieties: San Marzano: Crack Resistant. Great for sauce/paste.
Abe Lincoln: Very high in lycopene. Great for juice and ketchup
La Roma (plumb): High yield, early harvest, great for sauce and paste
Pink Girl (slicing): Crack resistance, long, late harvest, mild flavor

Storage/ Cooking: Store on counter, out of sunlight. Tomatoes are most nutritious and contain more antioxidants when cooked. 50% of tomato's nutritional value is in the skin!

Onions

General Rule: The stronger the flavor, the more nutritious.

Varieties: Red Barron: Stores well. Use the greens early or over-winter bulbs
Karmen: High in antioxidants, great raw or grilled. Best suited for cooler states

Storage / Cooking: Store in a cool, dry place for months. Cooking tames strong flavors, brings out sweetness, and increases nutritional content.

Fall varieties to try this year



Kale

General Rule: The darker the variety, the better

Varieties: Tuscan: Compact, high in antioxidants and sweet. Great in cool weather.
Red Russian: High in antioxidants. Very hardy, high yield. Sweeter when cool.

Harvest / Cooking: Eat as soon as picked. Best stored in fridge. Most nutritious when eaten raw.



Cabbage

General Rule: Red/purple varieties are 6x more nutritious than green

Varieties: Mammoth Red Rock: Uniform in size, good for cooking, salads and pickling
Red Express: Can also be an extra early crop, compact. Great flavor.

Harvest / Cooking: Can be stored in the fridge for long periods but 30% of the sweetness disappears within 3 days in the fridge. Most nutritious when eaten raw or pickled.

Frost can sweeten flavor of fall produce

The beauty of fall plants is that varieties are prolific when the season begins to cool. Keep up with the watering routine, and make sure to water in early morning rather than evenings. Brassicas, such as brussel sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, and kale will SWEETEN in flavor after a first frost. Wait until the sun warms the plant again before picking, and the leaves will firm up. Like most produce, wait until you plan to eat to pick your produce!

Healthy Soil, Healthy Harvest

The fall and winter months are a critical time to prepare for next year's harvest. In order to have another successful spring, consider regenerative practices to replenish soil and bring the medium back to health for your next harvest!