



SUMMER LETTUCE

Now is the time to switch the varieties of lettuce you are growing to those that will remain sweet through the heat of summer. Here are a few varieties that I have experimented with and found to be dependable.

VARIETIES

Jericho – an open headed romaine developed in Israel that remains sweet at temperatures in the low 100's, is slow to bolt and remains sweet while bolting, until the flowers open. It is also very cold tolerant.

Matchless – a true bib lettuce that remains sweet and soft in summer and grows vigorously in our alkaline soil

Red Sails – a loose leaf lettuce with beautiful color – does not tolerate drought well, but remains soft if given adequate water

Nevada – a Batavia type that seems slower growing than the other varieties, but has excellent flavor and texture

Craquerelle du Midi – a romaine that grows vigorously and is fairly drought tolerant

CULTIVATION

Growing good lettuce in summer requires a little different approach to cultivation than during gentler times.

Germination – Lettuce seed will go dormant at about 80°F, and since it requires light to germinate getting it started in summer can be challenging. The cues to germinate are moisture and a cool temperature, which can be met by placing the seed on a moist paper towel and holding it bagged for 2-3 days. After cueing, the seed cannot return to “dormancy” and can be sown in warm soils with good germination. I have had good results in summer by starting lettuce in six packs. For a continuous supply of high quality lettuce, start seeds every two weeks.

Transplanting – It is best to transplant them young, when they have 3-4 true leaves, and provide afternoon shade until they establish a vigorous root system. Mulching helps keep the soil cooler and more evenly moist.

Growing – Adequate water is essential to maintain table quality. Lettuce that is water or nutrient stressed will be tough and bitter. Afternoon shade and some wind protection make it easier to grow high quality lettuce. When the lettuce starts to mature, cut the entire plant a couple of inches above the soil – for a “cut and come” second harvest or just below the soil to make room for new transplants.

Harvesting – I have had excellent results by carefully picking the outer (larger) leaves rather than waiting for the entire plant to reach maturity or using the “cut and come” method.

SOURCES

[The Cooks Garden](#) – carries all varieties, except Jericho, along with others and a “Summer Lettuce” Mixture.

[Seeds of Change](#) – carries Jericho

Good growing and good eating with those sweet and juicy summer salads

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