

Let Us Plant Lettuce

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Cherie invented the lettuce wheelbarrow so she can enjoy homegrown produce all season long.

I just took a peek at my lettuce wheelbarrow, and discovered that the lettuce I'd planted about a month ago had suddenly shot up to a whopping two inches in height.

Just a week ago I practically needed a magnifying glass to see the tiny leaves, and dining on fresh, organic, homegrown salad seemed an unattainable dream.

Now, presumably thanks to our current cool rainy weather interspersed with occasional sun-breaks, my lettuce garden could actually be ready for thinning (and eating!) within a couple of weeks.

I can't wait.

Just like with fresh eggs, home-grown broccoli, and other farm-raised delicacies, once you've grown and dined on your own lettuce, it's hard to go back to the "fresh" grocery store lettuce stuffed in plastic bags or languishing in heaps on produce shelves.

Cherie's wheelbarrow beds are filled with gravel and compost-rich soil to produce the best greens possible.

Or at least go back to eating it with real pleasure.

Therefore, I've made it my goal to boost lettuce production on our farm (along with other vegetables and fruits, of course) so that I'll never be forced from sheer desperation to buy conventional supermarket lettuce again.

To that end, one easy lettuce-rearing method I implemented three years ago has worked so wonderfully, I have to share it with you: the lettuce wheelbarrow.

I took an old, broken-down metal wheelbarrow, hammered a bunch of nail holes in the bottom, layered some gravel, then filled it with compost-rich soil.

The first year I planted a full packet of Mesclun mix salad greens, the second year I tried Red Sails lettuce, and both times they provided us with a steady supply of leaves to pick throughout late spring, summer, and early fall.

Although the wheelbarrow required regular watering, it kept the lettuce away from the slugs that often nibble the greens in my raised-bed garden and within easy reach of the kitchen.

This year I'm testing Mascara, a gorgeous red heirloom variety I bought from Seedsavers Exchange.

How about you? What lettuce varieties have you discovered and savored?

~ Cherie

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