



Growing Microgreens At Home

It all started when we ordered house salads. On top was a garnish of arugula microgreens, crisp, green, and with a nutty flavor that left a hint of sweet peppers. While at dinner with my sister-in-law Lisa last Friday, she asked me, “How do I start growing microgreens at home?”

Microgreens are convenient to grow, as I don’t need a lot of equipment. I grow them on my windowsill. Like any good recipe, here are your ingredients:

- **Choose one variety. I’d say Radish or broccoli microgreens. They germinate in one to two days and grow quickly.**
- **Get some good-quality seeds, the GMO-free, organic ones.**
- **Get a container. I got a glass jar.**
- **Get some good organic soil.**
- **Get a spray bottle for watering.**
- **My kitchen faces north, and I get about 6 hours of sun a day. If you’re not so lucky, go get an ultraviolet lamp from the hardware store.**

This post shares a detailed set of instructions on how to grow microgreens, on your windowsill or in your kitchen that are delicious, healthy and safe to eat.

Quick Reads

What Types of Microgreens Should I Grow?

Should I Use Soil or Hydroponics?

What are the Directions?

What Nutrients Do They Need?

When and How do I Eat Them?

What to Avoid?

Summary

Types of Microgreens You Can Grow

So, the next day, Saturday, I headed over to Lisa's. I rang the doorbell and Alia my niece opened the door. "I want to learn how to grow microgreens!", she said.

Growing microgreens are great for new gardeners, even for gardeners looking for new crops. "Okay, let's get to it," I said.

The first thing we want to do is choose the variety of microgreens to grow. I wanted seeds that were big enough to make sowing them easy, and would sprout fast, in one to two days. They needed to be flavorful, crunchy and we could cut and eat them in time for dinner next Friday.

Only two variety fit the bill: radish and broccoli microgreens. We chose broccoli, but Alia wanted to grow the arugula microgreens she had the night before. You won't find arugula on anybody's list of easiest to grow microgreens. They take about 5 days to germinate and another 5-7 days to harvest. But, they're great with salads, scrambled eggs, and burgers and sandwiches!

Growing microgreens that are healthy and yummy starts with the best seeds. Try to purchase your seeds in small quantities, enough to last 3-4 months. I keep my leftover seeds in a glass jar in a dark cupboard. You might consider the crisper tray in the fridge if you have space.

Most varieties of organically grown seeds are available via mail order or upscale grocery stores in your area.

Many seed companies carry microgreen seeds in their catalogs.

If you can't find organic, at least look for non-GMO kind. Buy from a reputable company, one with the [Certified Naturally Grown](#) label.

If you buy broccoli, don't spend money buying cauliflower or kale or cabbage.

They are from the [same family, Brassicaceae](#), and near identical as microgreens.

Of course, I brought along packets of seeds.

Containers and Soil

Should I use soil or hydroponics? That's a big word, isn't it? So, here's the Wikipedia definition:

Hydroponics is a method of growing plants without soil by using mineral nutrient solutions in a water solvent.

I started out experimenting with clear plastic salad-mix boxes, milk jugs cut in half, and even a cake tray. Now, I use either glass jars or food-safe, biodegradable plastic salad boxes to grow microgreens.

While some home gardeners have developed elaborate urban growing systems such as hydroponics, you can repurpose plastic food containers.

Microgreens will grow in any container you can find around the house.

Now that Alia and I have our nice glass jar selected, it's time for the soil. We jump in her Mini and head to the hardware store down the street.

Potting soil or seedling mix work well for microgreens. But you want soil that is easy to wet, that doesn't hold too much water, and can give results a little faster.

We go with a starter mix. Don't add any fertilizer as it encourages rot!

Plant and Grow Them!

Get your glass jar or plastic container and fill it with soil. Add about one to two inches of that clean, seedling mix. Make sure you pack the soil loosely. Lightly water the soil.

One of the main issues with growing microgreens is getting enough seed. To get enough microgreens you will need to spread it across the soil. To give you an idea how much seed to start with: 1/4 to 1/2 cup for a 4" X 4" space is a lot. For smaller seeds, like the broccoli and arugula, you want 1/4-inch spaces between seeds.

Sprinkle your microgreens seeds as evenly as you can without letting any of them overlap. Barely cover the seeds with more soil—just enough to hold moisture. Mist your seeds and soil with your spray bottle until the soil surface is damp. This will nuzzle the seeds into the soil.

Next, cover the jar with a plastic lid. In early germination, your microgreens seeds don't need any light. Keep the trays in a warm place (between 72-75 degrees). This maintains humidity, moisture, and consistent temperature.

Check on the jar daily. Mist as needed, to keep the seeds moist. Many people make the mistake of over-watering seedlings. Be sure the soil is damp, not too dry or wet.

Once your microgreens seeds sprout (about 1-2 days), put the jar on your windowsill (or turn on the disco light). They'll need about 8-10 hours of light a day. Leave them uncovered. They wilt in humidity as I learned.



Getting Water, Light, Air and Warmth

When they emerge, the first leaf or the pair of leaves to show are the cotyledons, which can look very different from the leaves that follow, called "true" leaves.

The developing chlorophyll is what transforms palatable broccoli sprouts into tasty broccoli microgreens.

Seek at least ten hours of light.

While direct sunlight fosters the most succulent growth, indirect sunlight can suffice.

Use artificial lighting as a supplement, maybe in winter when sunlight is shorter and weaker.

Rotate the trays every few days so that all the seedlings get equal exposure to sunlight. Move the jar from window to window if you need to follow the sunlight.

And, just as you need at least six hours of sleep, plants need a minimum of six hours of darkness.

Water them once a day and watch them grow and change color. Use the spray bottle to keep the soil moist, not soggy.

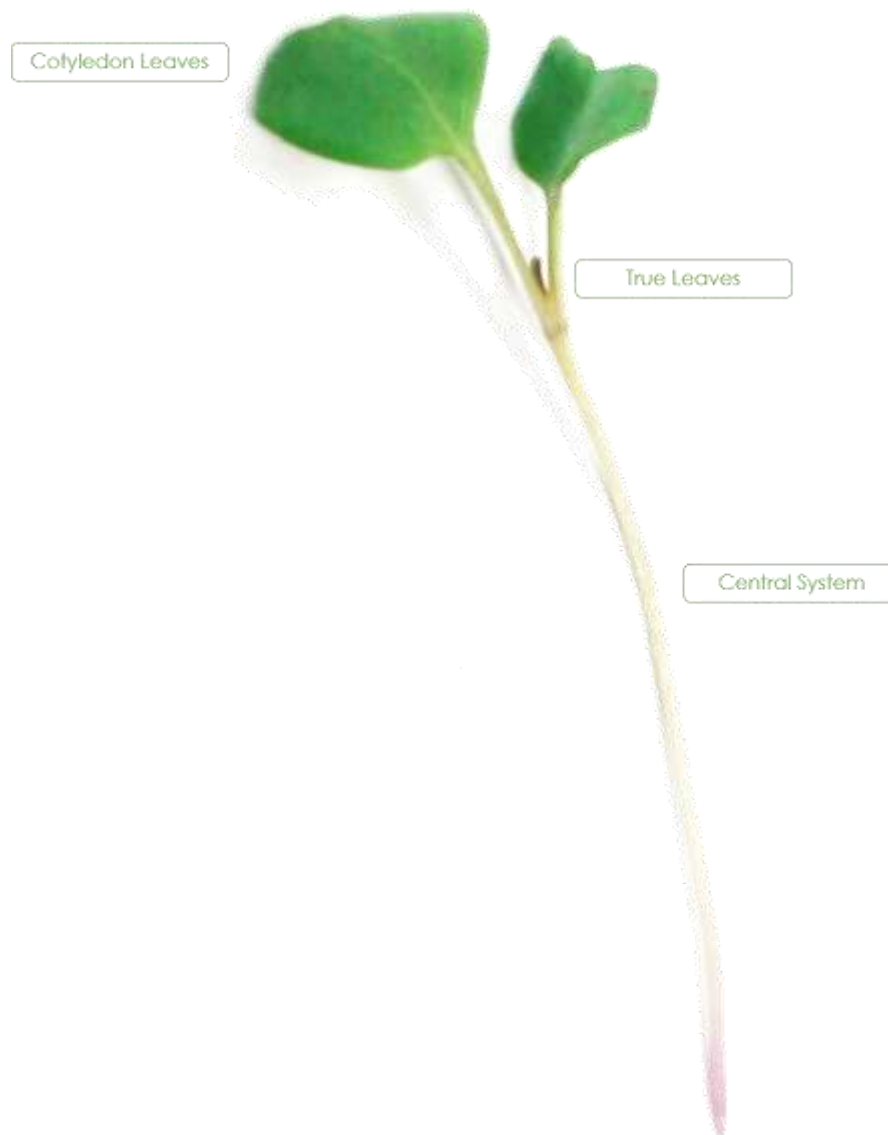


Figure 1 The three major parts of broccoli microgreen

Plants, including microgreens need air to grow. And just like plants the young microgreens will oxygenate and clean the surrounding air. Open your window or put your jar when it can get some fresh air one or two times per day.

During cold winter days with less daylight hours, broccoli can take up to 10 days to grow—double five days in summer!

You can encourage germination by using a seedling heating mat or a heated cabinet.

Alia and I place the jars under our grow lights to warm up the soil before sowing.

Harvesting

Three to four days after sprouting the microgreens will be 2-4" tall and ready to harvest. Don't let them get much taller than that, or they'll lose their sweetness.

Harvest with clean scissors or shears. Cut the stems just above the soil line.

Rinse in a small salad spinner, serve and eat. Add to salads, sandwiches, and wraps, or snack on them plain. Yum!

Store dry microgreens in the refrigerator in a sealed container.

Once you harvest the microgreens, compost the soil and roots as they will not regrow. To make a new batch, wash the jar, use clean seedling mix, seeds, and start again.

Avoiding Common Problems

Alia and I learned some things about growing microgreens that first week. Here are some suggestions to observe:

- When sowing, make sure each seed is in contact with the soil surface (otherwise they will not germinate).
- Too much water will cause the roots to rot and fungus growth.
- Always buy seeds from a reputable company to guard against soil-borne contamination from pathogens such as E. coli.
- Rinse seeds to be safe.
- If you have a garden sieve, use it to remove any debris from the soil.
- Check the soil you buy. Avoid microbes, bacteria, fungi and other harmful soil additives that can cause mold to grow.
- You the seedling mix. You need soil that will stay moist but not soggy.

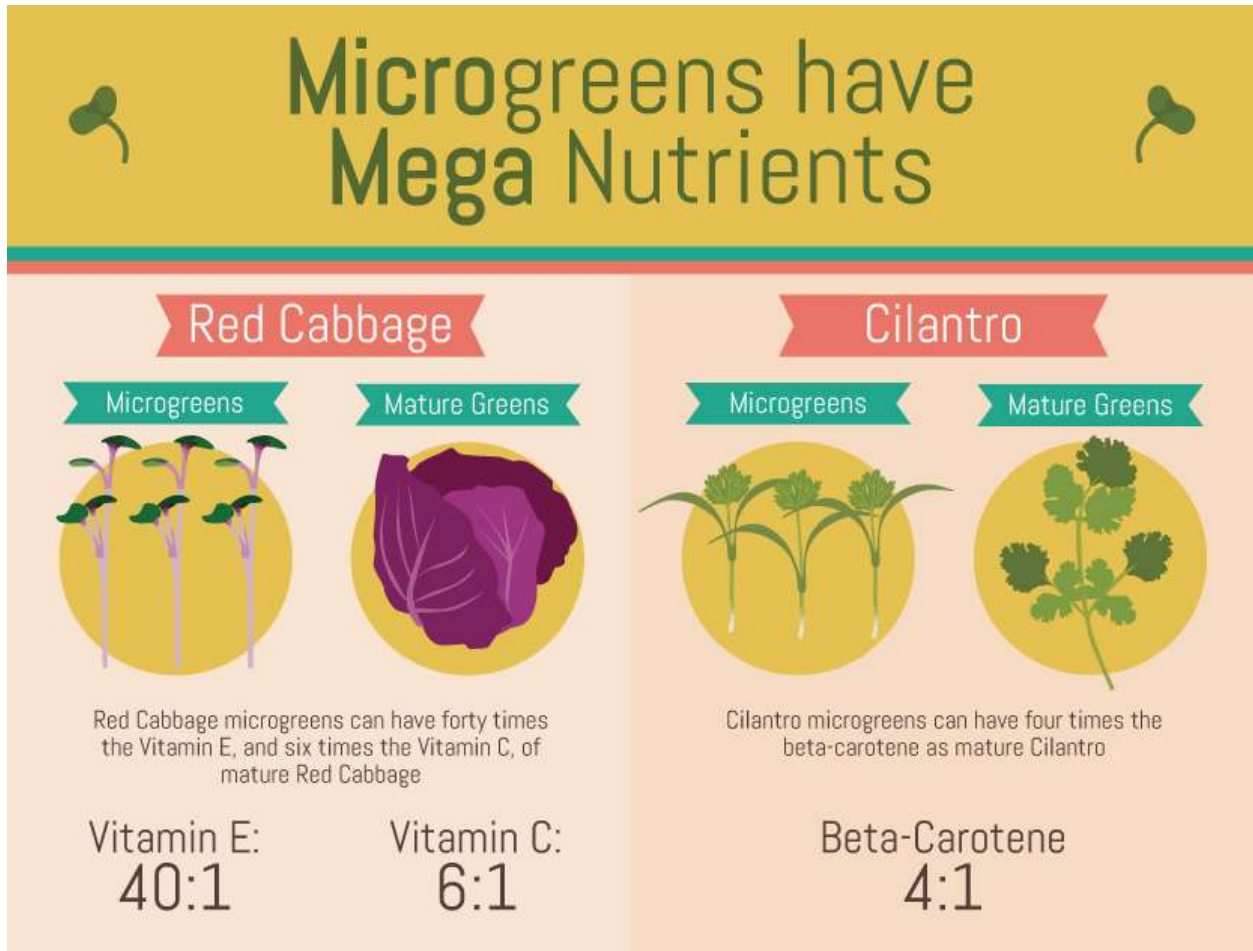
And just as important, like any raw vegetable (even greens labeled "triple-washed"), rinse your microgreens before eating.

Summary

You can grow microgreens year-round without outdoor space or even a balcony.

City dwelling doesn't always lend itself to planting, seeding, and harvesting and microgreens are never going to fill you up.

But when it comes to flavor, health and nutritional value they can live up just about any dish.



You can store your microgreens in the fridge for up to a week. Although, I just grow and harvest as I need.

Compost the soil (with red worms) and recycle it too.

But if growing microgreens is not for you, you can find ready-to-eat microgreens at your local upscale supermarket or farmer's market.

I've learned a lot about microgreens, how good they are for you, and what you can do with them. Check out my guide, "[The Beginner's Nutritional Guide to Incredible Microgreens.](#)"



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I'm the co-founder of JPureFarms, a startup. I live in Atlanta, Georgia, and enjoy urban farming, growing and writing about microgreens and their incredible health potential. I love my greens!