

GROWING ASIAN GREENS

So many Asian greens to choose from: mizuna, pak choi, tatsoi, giant red mustard, purple frills, and more. They are great crops for early spring or late summer sowings, offering lots of flavours and a wonderful variety of shapes and colours.

Seed Sowing

Sow between February and April into modules under cover and plant outdoors. For an autumn/winter crop sow July to October. Direct sow in rows 15 cm apart, then thin seedlings to the final spacing.

Single-harvest crops like pak choi and tatsoi are best sown in small regular batches to avoid a glut, cut and come again leaves can be sown less often.

Transplanting

Transplant your seedlings into their final growing position around May when the risk of frost has passed. Make sure to keep the area weed free and add plenty of organic matter before planting. Spacing varies depending on the stage you want to harvest: 8-10 cm for baby leaves, 20 cm for semi-mature, 25-30 cm for mature harvests.

Plant Care

Keep well watered; hot weather and dry conditions will encourage bolting. Early and late sowings can help avoid this issue. Mulch with straw to help retain water and prevent weed growth.

Challenges

Protect from slugs; avoid watering in the evening as this will encourage overnight slugs and snails. Plants may bolt in hot, dry conditions. If this happens, harvest the whole plant as it will become woody. Young flower spikes of pak choi in particular are quite delicious.

Harvest

Harvest time varies with the crop and your preference. Generally, baby leaves are ready in around 30 days, mature plants in 45-75 days. It's beneficial to thin out some young tasty baby plants to make room for the rest to grow larger.

Culinary Ideas

Great for stir fries, colourful salads, Asian slaw, spring rolls, sushi and many Asian recipes. Giant red mustard lends itself well to rolling and stuffing with sticky mirin rice.

Seed Saving

Asian greens belong to the species *brassica rapa* and will cross with all plants within it. If you want to save seed, ensure no other brassicas of this species are allowed to flower. Asian greens for seed are best grown in a block of at least twelve plants. Choose plants that are true to type, healthy and have shown disease resistance. Avoid early bolters.

Allow plants to flower and produce seed pods that will begin to dry. Cut the whole plant when seeds start turning black and mature further on a sheet indoors before they shatter. When fully dry, the seeds will fall out of the heads very easily. You can stand and stomp on the plants to break up the pods, then sieve out the debris.