

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



Arugula Growing Guide **Collin County Master Gardeners Association** <http://collin-tx.tamu.edu> * Collin@ag.tamu.edu

Arugula (*Eruca vesicaria sativa*) is a leafy green vegetable that is prized for its fresh, peppery taste. It is a cool season plant that will bolt (flower and go to seed) when the weather becomes hot. With the heat, the flavor of the leaves also becomes stronger and more pungent, and become tough.

It is best planted in North Texas in late winter or early spring, and again in September for a fall crop. Choose a site that provides at least eight hours of direct sun each day. Arugula can tolerate as little as five to six hours of direct sun but expect reduced production with reduced sun.

Arugula can be planted by direct seeding in the garden, or grown as transplants and set out, but it's so easy to grow from seed and is planted so early, that direct seeding in the garden is the preferred method. Soil should be rich and well drained. Add a generous amount of compost or other organic matter to the planting site and work two teaspoons a well balanced fertilizer per square foot into the soil prior to planting.

The seed is small, so the best method is to scatter the seed on turned soil that has been raked smooth, then gently rake the seed into the soil, making sure that it is no deeper than ¼" below the surface. Another method is to scatter the seed and cover lightly with seed starting mix. Water gently and carefully and keep the soil moist until the seeds germinate. Transplants should be placed 6" apart in holes that are the same size as the existing root ball.

When the seeds have germinated (5-7 days), reduce the frequency of watering gradually so the plants get tougher. Thin seedlings to 6" apart by clipping the extras at the soil line (don't pull out the seedlings as they may affect the root system of the nearby seedlings).

Arugula is quick growing and is ready to harvest in 30-40 days from germination. Harvest early in the morning when leaves are turgid (filled with water). Snip young foliage, wash it and serve or refrigerate it immediately.

The secrets to growing Arugula are cool temperatures, high fertility, and frequent harvesting. To keep leaves fresh and tender, shear the entire plant with hedge clippers every two to three weeks and side dress with a high nitrogen fertilizer.

Consider adding arugula to your diet. It has just 8 calories per 2-cup serving, but the nutrient-packed greens provide substantial amounts of vitamins A, K and C, folate, calcium, potassium, iron magnesium and several beneficial phytochemicals. Arugula combined with white beans and thin slices of red onion dressed with a light vinaigrette is delicious, but also consider mixing Arugula with other salad greens. Try it sautéed just until wilted with a splash of vinegar. It makes a tasty base for a serving of grilled salmon. Arugula pairs nicely with cheese and adds a peppery bite to an adult grilled cheese sandwich. Stir a handful of greens into Minestrone soup before serving for a flavor and nutrient boost. A favorite is to top a pear and provolone pizza or flatbread with a handful of arugula after it comes off the grill. You'll enjoy it even more knowing that you grew it!