

The one-day sun check

Pick a clear day when you are home. Choose up to three spots where pots could go. Once an hour, look at each spot and mark the box: **S** if the sun is shining directly on it, leave it blank if it is in shade. At the end, count the S marks in each column.

TIME	SPOT A: _____	SPOT B: _____	SPOT C: _____
7 am			
8 am			
9 am			
10 am			
11 am			
12 pm			
1 pm			
2 pm			
3 pm			
4 pm			
5 pm			
6 pm			
7 pm			
Hours of sun			

Reading the result

- **6 or more:** anything in this kit.
- **3 to 5:** leaves and most herbs.
- **Under 3:** a sunny window for herbs.

Do it again later

The sun's path shifts with the seasons. A spot that is bright in June can be shaded in March. Repeat the check in early spring and again in midsummer.

No time for a full day? Check three times, in the morning, around 1 pm and around 5 pm. It is rougher, but it tells you whether a spot gets morning sun, afternoon sun or both. A second copy of this worksheet is in the Garden Planner.

Sources: University of Illinois Extension.



CHAPTER 7 • THE 12 PLANTS

Leaf Lettuce

The quickest way to eat something you grew.

FIRST 60 DAYS

COOL-SEASON



CONTAINER

At least 6–8 in deep. Minimum 2 quarts; a 1–3 gallon pot or a window box is easier to keep moist. Thin to 4–6 in apart.



WATER

Keep evenly moist with frequent, light watering. Do not let it swing between dry and soaked.



START FROM

Seed, straight into the pot. Transplants also work and skip the thinning.



SUN

3–5 hours of direct sun is enough. Full sun is fine in cool spring and fall weather.



FIRST HARVEST

45–60 days from seed. You can start picking outer leaves when plants are 5–6 in tall.



WHEN

Sow 2–3 weeks before your last spring frost. Sow again 8–12 weeks before your first fall frost.

Plant it

- Sow seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ in deep. Some lettuce seed needs light to sprout: if the packet says so, press it onto the surface and barely cover it.
- Seed sprouts once the mix is above 40°F, best at 55–65°F, in about 7–10 days. Above 80°F it sprouts poorly.
- When seedlings have 3–4 true leaves, thin to 4–6 in apart. Snip the extras at the base instead of pulling.
- Sow a new pinch of seed every 10–14 days for a steady supply.

Harvest

- Pick the older, outer leaves first and let the center keep growing.
- Or cut the whole plant just above the soil when it is 6–10 in tall. Watered and fed, it regrows for a second cut in 2–3 weeks.

Keep it going

- Light frost does not hurt it. Protect it from a hard freeze.
- It is a medium feeder: a liquid fertilizer once a month is enough.
- It grows best below 75°F. As days get hot, move the pot to afternoon shade.

Varieties to look for

Black-Seeded Simpson, Salad Bowl, Buttercrunch, Ruby. Oak-leaf types are slower to bolt.

Most common mistake: Sowing too late in spring

Long days and summer heat make lettuce send up a seed stalk (bolting) and turn bitter. Once that starts it does not reverse: pull the plant and sow again when it cools down.

Sources: NC State Extension • University of Maryland Extension • Utah State University Extension • University of Illinois Extension • Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.