

Notes from Greens Workshop with Dave Stockton *

Westwood Community Gardens, 4/7/2012

Dave Stockton lives in Westwood and builds raised lettuce and greens tables. He offered a workshop, giving his audience advice on planting greens. He planted one of the communal tables at the Gardens, advising us to water it every day.

When you start a bed, use a high quality potting mix like BMI Berger or Fertaloam. You want long grain peat moss, not short strand. Talk to a knowledgeable staff member at a good garden center. Water it 'til the bed is saturated. Use a quality organic fertilizer like Garden-tone and mix it into the top 4 or 5 inches of your soil to generate bioactivity. Use a kelp and fish emulsion mix in a gallon sprayer and spray weekly. If you're using a raised lettuce bed with a draining bottom, empty beds in the winter to keep it lasting it longer.

Dave plants 15- 20 different kinds of lettuce. This is called "saladscapes". You have to water your lettuce beds every day, always starting at the outer edges because they're often otherwise missed. Thinning will be your first harvest. These will be quick crops. Thomas Jefferson planted a teaspoonful of lettuce seeds every Monday morning. You might not choose to do new crops that often but you could.

Dave plants triplex rows: a nurse row that shades the main row (since lettuce isn't crazy about long exposure to the direct sun during the summer), and then the middle row that you allow to get big. But remember that bigger plants get bitter so enjoy them when they're young and tender. After June 15th, put your lettuce tables into 0-3 hours of direct sunlight and keep them in the shade otherwise. Lettuce is a cool weather crop. You should stagger plant the greens with various lettuces and most herbs thought be careful about not planting the lettuces with the heat and sun loving herbs like basil. Most leafy herbs and spinach will do well in raised beds.

When you cut your plants, always cut back above the crown because that's where the plant regenerates.

Microgreens almost always harvested with only the first or second set of leaves.

These are some of the plants that Dave recommended or that we planted:

- Chard as baby greens and kale as a micro green to be enjoyed very small
- Golden persulin
- Pak Choi
- Chives or green onions as row dividers
- Nasturtium in the corners
- Basil likes full sun. Harvest frequently. Harvest leaves or cut it back and then yank the whole plant and toss it in the food processor for pesto.
- With microgreens, plant them close. You'll be harvesting them in a week.
- Arugula is great. Spacing doesn't matter. We planted cress, arugula, and radishes for the greens, broccoli, and pea shoots.

Dave gets his seeds from Sproutpeople.com and High Mowing organic seeds in Vermont.

I took notes but also fetched water and made row markers so I might have missed some good advice. Please post additional tips here (if you're a core team member) or on our Facebook page.