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Spring Greens Artistry

Kitchen garden expert
Ellen Ogden celebrates the
new growing season with salad
greens that are a feast for the
eye as well as the palate.



Vermont gardener
Ellen Ogden gathers
greens in her favorite
Vietnamese bamboo
harvest basket.



A bowl full of freshly harvested spring salad greens garnished with edible pansies is a highlight of Ellen's spring greens party menu. Tossed together here are lettuces 'Little Gem' and 'Cook's Garden Cutting Mix', mustard greens 'Osaka Purple' and 'Mizuna', arugula, and yellow pansies.

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My friends know me as a gardener and a cook, but I think of myself as a food artist.

I love color in the garden and on my plate. Using the garden as my canvas and seeds as a paintbrush, I combine waves of bronze-tipped lettuce with swirls of crimson radicchio and spikes of blue-green kale, accenting it all with brilliant nasturtiums. The resulting colorful garden inspires meals bursting with piquant flavors that I like to share, which is why I invited six of my friends over to celebrate the harvest from my spring garden.

As co-founder of The Cook's Garden seed catalog and author of *From the Cook's Garden* cookbook, I have been planting a kitchen garden in Vermont

for more than two decades, selecting seeds that reflect my taste for the unusual. Although I seek out exceptional heirloom varieties from around the world, I am rooted in New England cuisine, which is based on clean, simple seasonal food.

My cooking often starts with onions and garlic simmering in olive oil, while I dash to the garden to see what's ready for picking. In the spring, the garden is limited to cool-weather crops such as peas and salad greens. Salad greens are among the most satisfying vegetables to grow, because they usually pop out of the ground less than a week after the

Below left: Half this spiral bed is planted with nasturtiums and lettuces; the other half displays arching patterns of recently seeded mustard greens 'Mizuna', purslane 'Goldgelber', mesclun, and arugula. **Below right:** Pak choi shares space with baby lettuces.





Taste the Rainbow

Edible Heirlooms

Spring Sunburst

Herbal Seasonings

TASTE THE RAINBOW

- 1 Swiss chard
'Rainbow Chard'
- 2 *Nasturtium* 'Whirlybird'
- 3 Pak choi 'Mei Quing Choi'
- 4 Lettuce 'Little Gem'
- 5 Lettuce 'Ice Queen'
- 6 Lettuce 'Torenia'
- 7 Lettuce 'Lollo Rossa'
- 8 Mesclun 'Provençal'
- 9 Mesclun 'Misticanza'
- 10 Spinach 'Indian Summer'
- 11 Arugula
- 12 Purslane 'Goldgelber'
- 13 Mustard 'Mizuna'
- 14 Sweet pea

EDIBLE HEIRLOOMS

- 1 Marigold 'Lemon Gem'
- 2 Kale 'Black Tuscan'
- 3 Tomato 'Big Rainbow'
- 4 Tomato 'Persimmon'
- 5 Tomato 'Green Zebra'
- 6 Tomato 'Prudence Purple'
- 7 Pumpkin 'Cinderella's Carriage'
- 8 Radicchio
- 9 Melon 'Charentais'

SPRING SUNBURST

- 1 Spanish bluebells
(*Hyacinthoides hispanica*)
- 2 Sweet pea
- 3 Pak choi 'Mei Quing Choi'
- 4 Mesclun 'Provençal'
- 5 Mâche
- 6 Spinach 'Indian Summer'
- 7 Broadleaf cress
- 8 Lettuce 'Forellenschluss'
- 9 Lettuce 'Merlot'
- 10 Lettuce 'Four Seasons'
- 11 Lettuce 'Silvia'
- 12 Pole bean
'Trionfo violetto'

HERBAL SEASONINGS

- 1 Lavender 'Lady'
- 2 Basil 'Mammoth Sweet'
- 3 Basil 'Sweet Genovese'
- 4 Basil 'Fino Verde'
- 5 Basil 'Basilico Greco'
- 6 Rosemary
- 7 Sage
- 8 Thyme
- 9 Chives
- 10 Lovage
- 11 Tarragon
- 12 Pole bean
'Trionfo violetto'



Above: In the Spring Sunburst bed spokes of 'Four Seasons', 'Silvia', and 'Forellenschluss' lettuces with rows of 'Provençal' and 'Misticanza' mesclun are surrounded by Spanish bluebells (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*). **Opposite:** The classic four-square garden is anchored with a verbena standard surrounded by a skirt of catmint (*Nepeta*) and a ring of alpine strawberries (*Fragaria vesca*).

seeds are sown and are ready to harvest in four to six weeks. Fortunately, most greens tolerate just about any weather.

Most salad greens are "cut and come again," which means once cut, they will continue to grow, yielding a second harvest in several weeks. However, the bonus crop is not always as tender and succulent as the first growth and will often go to seed faster. The trick to continuous lettuce and salad-green production is successive planting. That means sowing a new crop every two weeks. I continue this through fall (cool weather heightens the flavor of most greens).

In my garden, mixing and matching a patchwork of lettuce with piquant blends of greens elevates my backyard and my table to works of art. Adding dabs of red orache (*Atriplex hortensis*), fronds of chervil (*Anthriscus cerefolium*), and rosettes of claytonia or miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*) highlights a simple bowl of mixed greens and spices up savory soups. As an artist who loves color in my garden and on my plate, inviting friends over to savor my homegrown food is the best way I know to celebrate spring. ■

For more information, see the Buyer's Guide on page 100. Recipes start on page 92.

HOW TO GROW GREENS

The various shapes and colors of salad greens add visual delight in the garden—and in a salad. Here are Ellen Ogden's tips on how to successfully grow them.

1. Locate your garden in a sunny spot. I set mine on the south side of the house to ensure it receives the warmest rays. A minimum of six hours of sunlight per day is optimum.

2. Enrich the soil. Each fall, I spread a layer of compost and seasoned turkey or poultry manure over the beds. I plant seeds of annual ryegrass to hold the soil through winter.

3. Wait until the soil is thawed and crumbly before you spade or till it in spring. Then, I turn under my winter ryegrass, shaking out and removing all of the weeds, then rake the beds smooth.



Lettuce 'Forellenschluss'



Alpine strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*)



4. Sow seeds of cool-season salad crops in early spring. Timing varies depending on what region you live in. I start peas, salad greens, and lettuce directly in the garden beginning in mid-April.

5. Create simple patterns. I always sketch a rough plan before I start. A plan helps me determine how many seeds or plants I'll need. Seeds sown in diagonal rows or wide arcs fill in gaps.

6. Plant edible flowers to set off your greens. Many of the savory blooms, such as Johnny jump-ups and nasturtiums, are versatile and add vibrancy when tossed into a bowl of greens.

For how to grow a salad in a container, visit BHGM.com/saladcontainers.





Swiss chard
'Bright Lights'



Forellenschluss
lettuce



lettuce
'Four Seasons'



lettuce
'Little Gem'



mustard greens
'Mizuna'



alpine strawberry
(*Fragaria vesca*)



violet



lettuce 'Ice Queen'



lettuce
'Cook's Garden
Cutting Mix'



nasturtium
'Whirlybird'

Guide to Greens

Lettuce may be the queen of greens, but it can use a little company in the garden and in the salad bowl. Here's how to identify and add other green ingredients to your culinary repertoire.

Arugula, or rocket, is native to the Mediterranean region. When harvested young and tender, this leafy green adds a peppery flavor to salads. Mature leaves can be sautéed.

Chervil is an herb with close family ties to parsley. Its anise-flavored, fernlike leaves add spice to salads.

Claytonia is nicknamed miner's lettuce for the California gold rush miners who ate the vitamin-C-rich leaves to prevent scurvy. The juicy, succulent leaves resemble tiny lily pads.

Corn salad, also called mâche and lamb's lettuce, grows wild in parts of Europe, North Africa, and Asia. Its pretty rosettes of soft, delicate leaves have a mild, nutty flavor.

Curly endive adds a pleasantly bitter flavor and texture to salads. Also known as chicory or frisée, the finely cut leaves contrast with the smooth, succulent leaves of Belgian endive, which are often used as crunchy bases for hors d'oeuvres.

Garden cress, a land-loving relative of watercress, has a peppery, tangy flavor. Leaves are used as garnishes or added to salads, sandwiches, and soups.

Kale is a loose-headed form of cabbage. The curly leaves sweeten in colder temperatures. Colorful, ornamental varieties—called flowering kale—also are edible.

Mesclun, often sold as field or baby greens, is a mixture of young greens such as lettuces, endive, arugula, mizuna, tatsoi, chard, radicchio, and mustard greens.

Mizuna, one of the many types of mustard greens, is a member of the Brassica family. Its ornamental leaves are sweeter than those of related cabbage and kale.


Pak choi (sometimes spelled bok choy) is a Chinese cabbage that forms ornamental vase-shape heads. The green leaves and white stems are sweet and crunchy, fresh or stir-fried.

Radicchio, or red chicory, produces compact round, cabbagelike heads of deep red leaves that impart a slightly bitter taste. Individual leaves often are used as a garnish.


Swiss chard is highly ornamental with its large leaves and contrasting ribbed veins. Many varieties have red, yellow, or orange stalks. Leaves are eaten raw when young; mature leaves can be cooked or sautéed, which takes away the slightly bitter taste.



radicchio
'Indigo'




kale 'Black
Tuscan'




broadleaf
cress



pak choi



curly parsley
'Krausa'



mustard greens
'Osaka Purple'



Lemon Vinaigrette

Hot Balsamic Vinaigrette

Roasted Garlic Dressing

Lemon Vinaigrette

You'll love the lemony tang of this refreshingly light vinaigrette.

Prep: 10 minutes

- 2 teaspoons finely shredded lemon peel
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 shallot, finely chopped (1 tablespoon)
- 1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon sugar (optional)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Snipped chives

In a small bowl, whisk together the lemon peel, lemon juice, shallot, and mustard. Whisk in the oil, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the dressing emulsifies. If desired, add sugar. Add salt and pepper to taste. Garnish vinaigrette with chives. Makes ½ cup dressing.

Hot Balsamic Vinaigrette

Offer a choice of this warm vinaigrette, the Roasted Garlic Dressing, and/or

Lemon Vinaigrette to accent a bowl of freshly harvested spring salad greens garnished with edible pansies.

Start to Finish: 15 minutes

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

In a small saucepan, combine the oil, vinegar, shallot, salt, and pepper. Place over medium-low heat. Cook until mixture just begins to bubble. Remove from heat. With a whisk, stir thoroughly to emulsify. Serve warm. Makes ½ cup.

Roasted Garlic Dressing

Our taste panel loved the balance of garlic and lime flavors in this dressing.

Prep: 15 minutes Roast: 25 minutes

Oven: 400°F

- 1 head garlic
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ¼ cup lime juice (about 2 limes)
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup olive oil

Preheat oven to 400°F. Peel away outer dry leaves from head of garlic, leaving skin of garlic cloves intact. Cut off pointed top portion of head (about ¼ inch) with a knife, leaving the bulb intact. Place on a double-thick, 12-inch square of foil.

Drizzle garlic with the 1 teaspoon oil. Fold foil to enclose garlic. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until garlic is soft. Cool.

Squeeze pulp from garlic cloves into blender, discarding skins. Add lime juice, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Cover and blend until smooth. With the blender running, slowly add the ½ cup oil in a thin steady stream through the hole in the lid until mixture is well combined and slightly thickened.

Store any leftover dressing in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 1 week. Makes ¾ cup.

Sorrel Soup

Delicious served either hot or cold as an appetizer or as a side dish. If you are reheating the soup, Ellen cautions not to let it boil it as it may separate.

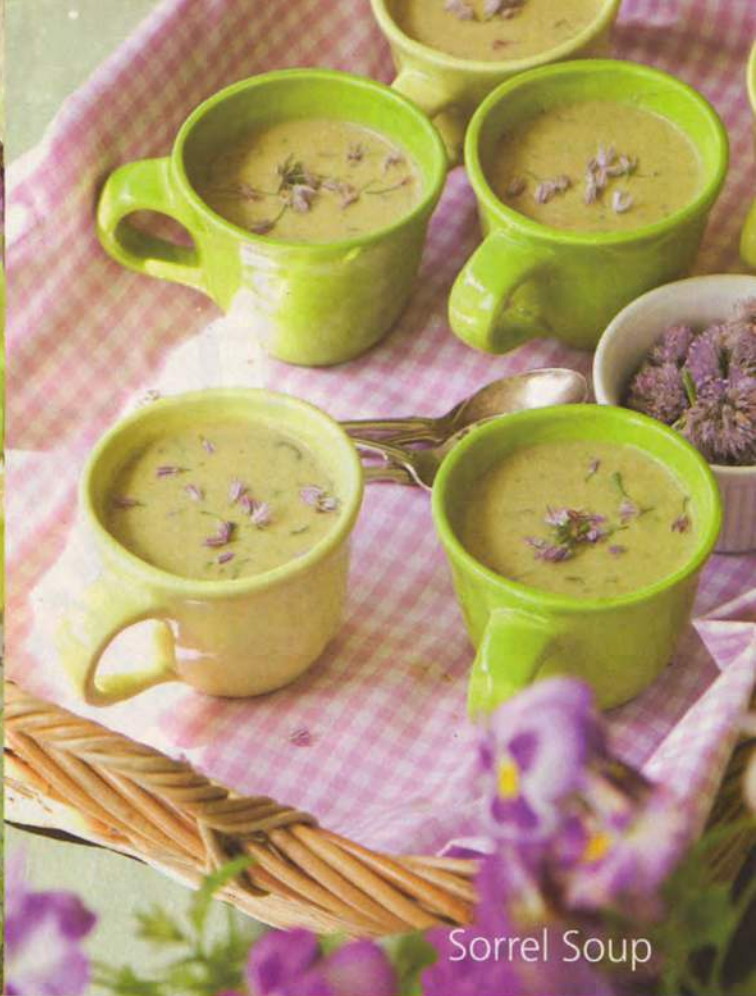
Prep: 20 minutes Cook: 26 minutes

- ¼ cup butter
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 4 cups torn sorrel
- 2 cups diced, peeled potatoes
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 cups chicken broth
- ½ cup half-and-half or light cream
- Chopped fresh chives, chive blossoms, or violas (optional)

In a large saucepan, heat the butter. Add onion and cook over medium heat for 5 to 10 minutes until tender. Stir in 3 cups of the sorrel, the potatoes, and salt. Cook 1 minute, or until the sorrel softens and wilts. Add broth and bring to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, 20 to 30 minutes, or until potatoes are tender.

Cool mixture slightly. Transfer, half at a time if necessary, to a food processor or blender. Process until smooth. Add the remaining 1 cup sorrel and the half-and-half; process until just combined (sorrel pieces should still be visible).

Serve immediately or chill to serve cold. If desired, sprinkle with chives, chive blossoms, or violas. Makes 4 to 6 servings. ■



Sorrel Soup

Above left: Lunch is served buffet style featuring a bowl of spring greens, dressings, and an edible garnish of chive blossoms. **Below:** Friends gather on the porch to taste spring flavors in a menu that includes soup, salad, and fish baked with fresh greens and herbs.

