

## Grow great spinach - eat more greens!

After two different conversations with Master Gardener neighbors about difficulties we all experienced growing spinach, I suggested we hold a spinach trial at the Lake Merritt Trials Garden this fall. We planted 6 varieties (we pooled our seed stashes) on October 5<sup>th</sup> and had our first harvest on November 16<sup>th</sup> (seedlings appeared October 26<sup>th</sup>). Trials Garden volunteers enjoyed delicious spinach in salad, soup, frittata and stir fry. The Trombetta squash (which was also productive through the fall) paired wonderfully with the spinach.

The Tye F-1 spinach was a standout, with the highest rate of germination, most yield and a “good flavor” as determined by our taste testing. Tarpy F-1, also very productive, was considered “slightly bitter”. Baby Leaf Catalina was considered to be “sweet”, but was one of the least productive.

Unique to this trial was the flat leaf variety Oriental Giant, a Japanese hybrid (seeds donated by Renee’s Garden Seeds). The leaves are large and arrowhead shaped. The plants were productive, and the flavor considered a favorite by some volunteers. The size and shape of the plant would lend itself to being mixed in with flowers and perennials in a garden bed.

Our spinach was productive into February but as the plants got older we had more issues with pests, including loopers (egg stage). As of mid February disease was not an issue. The spinach kept well in the refrigerator, surprising me over the holidays with a bag lost for about 10 days behind holiday pies – it made great soup!

Eat and enjoy your greens!

Variety	Seedlings/harvest amount	Taste	Recommendation
Tye F-1	most productive, best germination	Good flavor	Yes
Tarpy F-1	productive, good germination	Slightly bitter/strong flavor	Yes
Oriental Giant	productive, lower germination rates	Sweet flavor	Yes
Baby Leaf Catalina	Less productive and lower germination rates	Sweet flavor	Yes
Bloomsdale Longstanding	Less productive and lower germination rates		No
Correnta Hybrid	least productive and lower germination rates		No