



Advice to Grow by...Ask Us! Master Gardener Program

University of California Cooperative Extension 

February 2024

When I gardened in Northern California's mild climate, February was my favorite month. At the beginning, it felt like winter, and at the end of February, you knew spring was just around the corner. Well, here in the Tahoe Basin, we must be patient and wait another couple of months to get that spring punch. Meanwhile, now is a great time to plan and perhaps review what went well in your garden last season. Every year is different. Last summer we had mild, almost cool weather and were blessed with very little smoke. Due to all the snow, it was hard to get things started outside. This year, it's "dry January" and who knows what kind of spring we will have. It is best to be prepared nonetheless.



This month we feature subjects suitable to winter gardens. Try growing some *microgreens*! Several of our master gardeners have been growing and writing about them. If you have indoor plants, now is a great time to take a shower with them for a boost of extra humidity. You can groom and clean the leaves for a healthier plant. Mist the undersides of house plant leaves and check for overwintering pests such as mealybugs, mites and scale. I will list some links on how to control these below.

Enjoy this February snapshot of orchids growing in Chicago (indoors) at its famed botanical garden. If you get a chance to visit, don't miss it.

Your feedback is important to us. Please contact [me](#) with suggestions and comments.

Sandy Gainza
UCCE Master Gardener Volunteer, Newsletter Editor



Tahoe Gardeners: Save These Dates!

The 2024 Grow Your Own Festivals are scheduled for three dates and locations this year:

- **Friday, May 31 in Tahoe City**
- **Saturday, June 1 in Truckee**
- **Saturday, June 8 in South Lake Tahoe**

UC Master Gardeners will be at each event offering information on successfully growing summer produce at home in the Tahoe area.

The Grow Your Own committee needs help planning these events. You don't need to be a Master Gardener to help plan, find participants, or resources. Please contact committee chairman [David Long](#) if you can help.

Upcoming Events

- [Click here to discover UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County events.](#)
- [This link will take you to the complete list of UCCE Central Sierra events.](#)
- [Click here to discover UCCE Master Gardener of Placer County events.](#)
- [Click here to discover UCCE Master Food Preserver of Central Sierra events.](#)
- [Click here to see a list of University of Nevada Extension events.](#)



Microgreens? The perfect winter food!

By Dave Long, UCCE Master Gardener

Microgreens are the seedling stage of many types of vegetables. Typically, microgreens are harvested after the formation of the second set of true leaves, but before the 4th- to 6th true leaves appear. Only the leaves and stem are harvested, not the roots. From a nutritional standpoint, microgreens can have more vitamins and nutrition than the adult plant on a

weight-to-weight basis – so they are healthy but you'll need to eat a lot of microgreens to equal one serving of a typical vegetable.

Microgreen is a term coined by chef Craig Hartman in 1990, which he used to explain the exceptionally small baby greens that he added to salads and main dishes. Microgreens differ from sprouts. Sprouts are mainly grown without soil, and harvested after the formation of the first set of true leaves. The whole plant, including roots are used. Microgreens use soil, or other support media for root development, so the roots are imbedded. With microgreens, only the leaves and stems are harvested, leaving the roots in the growing medium.

Any number of vegetables can be used as microgreens. Some vegetables that should not be grown for microgreens include tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, potatoes, walnuts and butternut squash. These plant seedlings contain compounds that can make you ill.

For Dave's how to's, click [HERE](#).

(Photo Courtesy of Johnny's Seeds)

Additional help from Master Gardeners:

[Butte County MGs](#)

[Solano County MGs](#)

[Sonoma County MGs](#)

Microgreens in Local Schools

Last year, the Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe did several workshops on growing microgreens at most elementary schools in and around South Lake Tahoe. The Master Gardeners also offered a workshop through the Grow Your Own program. This winter we are again offering programs for 3rd and/or 4th grade classes, with Master Gardener **Roxanne Raines** coordinating. At Zephyr Cover Elementary, the 4th grade class started a business of packaging packets of microgreen seeds for the Master Gardeners. These packets will be used in our school programs, handed out at the Farmers' Market and can be purchased through the Master Gardeners. We're expecting a lot of people to try growing microgreens!



Indoors with your children? Grow some microgreens at home!

Master Gardener class of 2024 member Kristianne Hanneman teaches us how to do this great indoor growing project at home.

It's cold outside, but just because it's winter doesn't mean the planting fun has to end. An easy indoor gardening project to do during the winter that's kid-friendly is growing microgreens. Most microgreens grow indoors at room temperature (ideally 60-77 degrees F), so it's possible to grow them indoors year-round. It only takes about 2-3 weeks until they are ready for harvest!

Kids get a sense of responsibility for their living plants, and it's fun to watch them get excited about how much they grow each day. Once the microgreens are ready for harvesting, the kids will have fun taking part in meal prep by adding them to your favorite recipes. Microgreens can be a good source of vitamin C, and are a healthy addition to sandwiches, salads, soups, or many other dishes in the kitchen.

The same seeds used to grow and harvest vegetables like radishes, kale, arugula, and broccoli can be used to grow microgreens – the plant is just harvested sooner. This means you don't need special seeds to grow your microgreens, and you might even have some seeds that will work at home already.



What you will need:

- Microgreens seeds (e.g., kale, arugula, broccoli, radish)
- Paper cups
- Potting soil
- Water
- A bright window



1. Fill up small paper cups with soil, leaving about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch from the top.
2. Sprinkle microgreen seeds on top of the soil and gently press them in. Make sure they aren't more than $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch deep.
3. Mist the soil with a spray bottle (or water carefully) until the soil is moist. You'll want to keep the soil moist at all times, so check it often every day.
4. Place the paper cups in a window sill of a bright window that gets a lot of sun. Microgreens typically need 6-8 hours of sun per day.

The microgreens will be ready to harvest when the seedlings are 1-3 inches tall, which typically takes 2-3 weeks. Use a clean pair of scissors to cut them off just above the soil. Microgreens won't grow back, so you'll need to start the fun all over again by planting new seeds once you've enjoyed your harvest. Experiment with different microgreens, since they all look and taste different!

Microgreen References:

UC Master Gardener Program of Sonoma County. (2022). [Growing Microgreens](#).

Ebert, A. W., et. al. (2022). [Sprouts and Microgreens—Novel Food Sources for Healthy Diets](#). *Plants*.

Di Gioia, F. and Santamaria, P. (2015). [Microgreens-Novel fresh and functional food to explore all the value of biodiversity](#).



Deciduous Pine Tree?

No, not bark beetles or drought. This forest scene, shot by photographer Don Flaten last October in Idaho, features the Tamarack Pine (*Larix laricina*), also known as Eastern Larch. Each year the needles turn gold, orange and brown before the needles drop. Native to Canada, this

tree is found in forests along the US northern border from Montana to the Adirondacks in New York state.

Wildlife & Water Friendly Gardens: Free Series 2024 Online Continues!!



Learn to modify your gardening practices to benefit and attract wildlife, all while protecting the health of our watersheds.

Sponsored by the Environmental Learning Center in Oregon. Take advantage of these FREE one hour seminars, running on Thursdays, noon to 1 p.m. from NOW through March 7.

Registration is Required



Indoor Houseplant Pests?

Check out these tips from the [UC's Pest Notes Library](#). You will find identification photos and control methods listed.

Mealybugs

Scale

Spider Mites

Thrips

Aphids

A few tips if you have indoor plant pests:

Isolate the infected plant until treatment is complete. Many of these bugs, like scale, need a bridge to spread from one plant to the next.

Inspect plants before you buy them and inspect carefully as you repot a plant.

Make sure you clean all pots and tools thoroughly and disinfect pruning tools between cuts if trimming your plants.

Discard any used soil or planting medium you suspect of harboring pests.

February Tips for Tahoe Gardeners

Time to plan your summer garden!

1. Take a look at your current seed inventory, and order seeds for this year.
2. Clean your seed starting pots and trays and disinfect with a 10% bleach solution to kill harmful bacteria.
3. Find suitable seed starting medium; potting soil and garden soil are not the best choices. They are too heavy for seed germination and garden soil may contain pathogens harmful to delicate seedlings.
4. Think about a light source; you may need grow lights and/or a heat mat to get seeds going this time of year.
5. Plan backwards: you don't want your seedlings to get too large and lanky before transplanting to your garden. Wait another few weeks to start warm season seeds such as tomatoes or peppers.

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