



## The easiest salads you'll ever grow

By JAN RIGGENBACH, Midwest Gardening

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For many years, seed companies have been selling mild or spicy mixtures of lettuces and other salad greens in a single packet.

These mixtures, called mesclun, are handy for gardeners who want to grow gourmet salads without buying a lot of different seed packets.

Some companies also sell pelleted lettuce seeds to make it easier for gardeners to sow and space the seeds.

This year, a new product developed by Pan American Seed combines both ideas for the easiest salads you'll ever grow.

SimplySalad, perfect for timid new gardeners, offers the most foolproof way yet to grow gourmet salads.

SimplySalad combines a mix of five to seven seeds of tasty, pretty greens in a single pellet. Just plant four or five pellets in a shallow container and in about a month you'll be harvesting gourmet salad greens. As with all leaf lettuces, you can cut the leaves to about an inch above the soil line and enjoy a new crop about three weeks later.

The new pellets come in your choice of three mixes. I can vouch for the Alfresco Mixture, which contains red and green leaf lettuces, arugula, endive and radicchio for a Mediterranean flavor. I grew some in a pot last fall and more under lights this winter and enjoyed many delightful salads. Other SimplySalad choices I've yet to try include the City Garden Mixture, with a traditional mild mix of red and green leaf lettuces, and the Global Gourmet Mixture, which has Asian greens mixed with red and green leaf lettuces.

Harris Seeds (800-544-7938, [www.harriseseeds.com](http://www.harriseseeds.com)) offers all three mixtures plus a growing kit that includes everything you'll need to grow the Alfresco Mixture: Seed pellets, a bowl planter and a bag of potting soil with slow-release fertilizer. If you don't want to plant the pellets yourself, you should also be able to buy sprouted plants at some retail garden centers this spring.

All the greens in a single pellet sprout at about the same time. Weeding is less tedious, because the seedlings grow in clusters with plenty of space between. Plant in spring and fall because lettuces and other greens grow best in cool weather.

Once you get hooked on homegrown salads, you'll probably want to try other salad crops. While all leaf lettuces are exceptionally easy to grow, iceberg lettuce is a challenge in our region. Once the weather turns hot, the plants quickly collapse and rot.

Batavian lettuces, also known as summer crisp varieties, offer a solution. This type combines the ease of growing leaf lettuce plus the crispness of an iceberg head. Avoid feast or famine by making a small sowing every two weeks.

Jan Riggensbach writes her syndicated gardening column from her home near Glenwood. See [www.midwestgardening.com](http://www.midwestgardening.com) for more information.