



# Seed Savers EXCHANGE

## **How to Grow Mustard Greens (*Brassica juncea*)**

*Mustard greens are a cool-season crop that are easy to grow. They tolerate a light frost and can be grown all winter in warmer climates. Exposure to frost makes the leaves sweeter, and warm weather makes the leaves spicier.*

**Time of Planting:** Sow from early spring to late summer. Mustard greens can tolerate a light frost.

**Spacing Requirements:** When seeding, place seeds 1 inch apart in rows 6 to 8 inches apart. As they grow, thin 6 to 18 inches apart (depending on variety).

**Time to Germination:** 4 to 7 days.

**Special Considerations:** When growing for seed, increase spacing between plants and between rows (rows should be 24 to 36 inches apart). Staking plants is also recommended when growing for seed.

**Common Pests and Diseases (and how to manage):** Aphids, whiteflies, and flea beetles are all common pests. To protect crops, use row covers.

**Harvest (when and how):** Mustard greens can be harvested in about 6 weeks. To harvest, cut the large outside leaves at the base and leave the smaller, inner leaves to continue to grow. You can continuously harvest throughout the season.

**Eating:** Mustard greens make a tasty, spicy addition to salads and sandwiches.

**Storing:** Mustard greens can be stored in the refrigerator for about a week.

## **How to Save Mustard Greens Seeds**

*Mustard greens are relatively simple to grow for seed in most regions of the United States, and harvesting and cleaning mustard seeds is an easy, straightforward process.*

**Life Cycle:** Annual/biennial

**Recommended Isolation Distance:** Separate varieties by 800 feet to ½ mile.

**Recommended Population Sizes:** To ensure viable seeds, save seeds from at least 5 mustard plants. When maintaining a variety over many generations, save seeds from 20 to 50 plants. If you're saving seeds for genetic preservation of a rare variety, save seeds from 80 plants.

**Assessing Seed Maturity:** Seed maturity occurs after market maturity, when siliques dry to a light brown color. Shattering is common.

**Harvesting:** The time of seed harvest will vary by location and whether the crop was overwintered or spring-planted. Seeds can be gathered by cutting branches or by harvesting whole plants. To prevent seed loss, the harvested material should be placed on drop cloths or in containers.

**Cleaning and Processing:** There are several methods to thresh seeds. Small harvests can be threshed by rubbing fruits between your hands or against a surface that will cause siliques to break open. For larger harvests, place whole plants in large tubs or on tarps and tread on them. Discard stalks after seeds have been dislodged, and screen and winnow the remaining material.

**Storage and Viability:** When stored in cool, dry conditions, seeds can remain viable for six years.

For more seed saving and gardening tips, visit:  
[seedsavers.org/learn](https://seedsavers.org/learn)