

Homegrown **MICROGREENS** – this mini-guide is adapted from the book *Microgreen Garden* by Mark Mathew Braunstein www.MicroGreenGarden.com

Microgreens, the early stages of greens such as basil and broccoli, start as sprouts and then keep on growing. A good way to begin is in small repurposed plastic food containers. Sample and discover what seeds you like before growing them in larger vessels such as cafeteria trays and nursery flats. Small containers will get you started, larger trays will keep you going.

Yet tray gardening is perfect for microgreens such as pea shoots and sunflower greens, but few others. Watered from above, the densely packed stems trap water which can cause mold. Using repurposed fruit containers, you can water from below. The stems will not trap water, so no rot.

Choose seed varieties wisely. If you grow broccoli, you don't need to grow many other Brassicas such as kale or cabbage because their microgreens are quite similar. Among the Brassicas, broccoli grows quickly, tastes mild, and its seeds are available in health food stores, so broccoli is good for beginners. Seeds other than Brassicas good for beginners are basil, cress, and lettuce.

Starting from the ground up, you will need:

CONTAINERS – half-pint or pint (250 or 500 mL) size

SOIL – potting soil or seedling mix or both

SEEDS – only untreated, and preferably organically-grown

WATER – preferably non-chlorinated, but even city tap water will do

LIGHT – sunlight is best, fluorescent lighting can supplement

WARMTH & AIR – microgreens' needs are identical to your own

1) Eat lots of small fruits: blueberries, raspberries, cherry tomatoes, etc. Such small fruits (tomatoes botanically are fruits) usually are packaged in plastic pint (500 mL) containers. Raspberries and blackberries come packaged by the half-pint (250 mL), which are also useful.

2) Save the plastic containers, rather than recycle or (gasp!) discard them. As you eat mostly whole and plant-based foods, you soon will accumulate an abundance of plastic containers. The crucial features of these containers are vents on their bottoms and vented lids on their tops. Rinse, dry, and save them.

3) Cut off the lids and save half of those lids.

4) Place two containers together, one inside the other. This extra rigidity protects the fragile rootlets from shifting or being crushed along the bottom of the container.

5) Fill the doubled-up containers with moistened soil, right up to the brim. In time, experiment with the varieties of potting soils and seedling mixes available at your local gardening store to learn which render best results.

6) Spread the seeds upon the soil evenly and sparsely, allowing ample room between seeds. Better that they not touch each other, and definitely not lay one atop another. For seeds the size of broccoli the maximum is 1 teaspoon (5 mL) per container. For small seeds such as basil, maximum 1/2 teaspoon (2.5 mL). Press the seeds firmly into the soil, but do not cover them with soil, else their leaves later become encrusted with dry soil.

7) Spray the seeds with water. Use misters or spray bottles. Kitchen sink sprayers are too strong.

8) Cover the container with its snap-on lid. You need not snap it on, you can just lay it atop.

9) At least twice daily, lift the lid, and spray.

10) Remove the lid when the sprouts reach the height of the lid. In warm temperatures, broccoli hits the ceiling upon the second day, while basil will do so on the fourth. Your mileage will vary.

11) Water daily by placing the container into a pool of water. Fill a basin with water to half the height of the container and place the container into the basin. Allow to soak up the water for a minute or so. Remove the container, set it at a slight angle inside a sink, and allow it to drain for a minute or more.

12) Expose to light. Direct sunlight is ideal, indirect sunlight will suffice, and fluorescent lights are good substitutes. With indirect light, greens require longer time to grow and can become "leggy." Provide at least 12 hours of light per day. And assure also at least 6 hours of darkness. Your goal is short stems and lush, deep green leaves. Count on 7 or 8 days for broccoli, 10 or 11 for basil.

13) Harvest. Tilt the container vertically, cut the microgreens with scissors, and they can fall right onto your dinner plate. No washing needed. Nor are recipes needed. Enjoy microgreens just as they are.



View or download this mini-guide, other PDFs, and more detailed instructions at: www.MicroGreenGarden.com