



Seed to Salad: Variety Taste Test

Your garden is well-established, and your group has the routines of watering and weeding down pat. Soon you're wondering: when can we eat?! Now is a great time to introduce the horticultural concept of thinning and the fun of a taste test.

Thinning

Broadcasting many tiny seeds usually creates too many seedlings in a small space. Removing the excess seedlings, called thinning, allows enough room for the remaining plants to grow.

Mid-Season Taste Test

Rather than tossing the thinned seedlings on the compost pile, run a taste test to check out the flavors and other qualities of the lettuces and greens.

1. First assess the gardens to determine which lettuces and greens need thinning.
2. Make a chart listing the variety names, as well as the names of the youth in the group.
3. Decide on a rating system. You can rate each on a scale of 1 to 5, give a thumbs up or thumbs down, use different versions of smiley faces, or use an "icky," "ok," or "yum" rating. We offer an example below, and a blank chart.
4. Rate greens one variety at a time. Taste, share your ratings one by one, and record on the chart.
5. Have water on hand to drink in between tastes.
6. Save your ratings chart and repeat the taste test at harvest time. Has anyone's opinion changed? Has the taste of some greens improved or declined with time?

Sample Ratings Chart:

Name/Variety	Freckles	Red Sails	Spinach	Swiss Chard	Tango
Victor	yum	ok	yum	yum	ick
Anna	yum	ok	yum	yum	ok
Terry	ok	ick	ok	yum	ok
Audrey	yum	yum	ick	yum	yum
Bruce	ick	yum	ok	yum	ick
Gia	ok	ick	yum	yum	ok
Yolore	yum	ok	yum	yum	ok
Hannah	yum	ick	yum	yum	ick
Yuuki	yum	ok	ok	yum	ok

Blank Ratings Chart:

Varieties to the right, and names below:					

Note:

Although you will also need to thin root vegetables like carrots and radishes, the thinnings may not be large enough to eat at mid-season.

For more activities related to taste testing of vegetable varieties, visit Vvi: Vegetable Variety Investigations:

<http://vegvariety.cce.cornell.edu/>