



## Growing Delicious Mesclun Mixes

Nothing can surpass the delicious tastes, textures and pretty colors of tender baby salad lettuces freshly harvested, simply dressed, and enjoyed just minutes after they are cut. These luscious salads are called Mesclun today, a French term that originally meant a mixture of tender salads that were wild-harvested to "renew the blood" each spring. In Italy, the mixture is called Misticanza, and contains different piquant chicories along with lettuces.

In the USA, Mesclun has come to mean any mixture of young salad greens that is sown, grown and cut all together. Despite the fact that many Mesclun mixtures are now available pre-bagged in supermarkets nationwide, nothing can compare with Mesclun harvested from your own garden.

### **How to sow and grow your Mesclun:**

Start with a well prepared 2 or 3 foot square seedbed area. Fork over the soil well and break up all the clumps so the soil is finely worked and of an even texture. Or use a half barrel or a 15 to 18 inch planter filled with good potting soil. Make sure the soil is moist before sowing seeds. Pour the Mesclun lettuces seed mixture into your palm, close your hand and carefully shake the seed out, broadcasting it over the bed. Try and space the seeds evenly, about 1/2 inch apart (Practice first over 4 or 5 sheets of paper toweling so you can get the knack of sowing the seeds evenly.)



*"Monet's Garden" Mesclun*

### **Renee's Garden Seeds Lettuces:**

**Paris Market Mesclun**  
**Cut and Come Again Baby Mesclun**  
**Farmer's Market Blend**  
**Garden Babies**  
**Heirloom Cutting Mix**  
**Blush Batavians**  
**Italian Misticanza**  
**Merveille de 4 Saisons**  
**Monet's Garden Mesclun**  
**Caesar Duo**  
**Summer Bouquet**  
**California Spicy Greens**

**To purchase Renee's Garden Seeds, visit our website at [www.reneesgarden.com](http://www.reneesgarden.com)**

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*Cut and Come Again  
Baby Mesclun*

After sowing the seed, sift fine soil or potting mix lightly over the seed, covering it about 1/4 inch deep. Then sprinkle the sown bed with a fine spray of water, wetting it thoroughly but gently.

Keep the seedbed evenly moist while awaiting germination over 1 to 2 weeks. Seedlings may come up somewhat unevenly, so watch carefully and be sure to protect them from marauding birds that often find lettuce seedlings especially alluring.

Your crop of mixed lettuce leaves will grow rapidly if you keep it well watered. If you've sown seed evenly, the seedlings will come up thickly and weeds should not be a problem, but, if necessary, weed the bed while the lettuce plants are tiny so they'll have room to grow. If there are a few bare spots, don't worry as the lettuces generally will fill them in as they grow.

In about 35 – 45 days, your baby lettuces will reach 4 to 6 inches tall and it's time to begin enjoying them in salads. Harvest by the "cut and come again" method and they'll regrow handily for several cuttings. To do this, simply take a sharp scissors and shear off a patch of leaves in the amount you need to fill your salad bowl. Cut the leaves off at 1 to 2 inches above the soil level. Within a day or two of cutting, water the bed well and feed lightly with fish emulsion solution and the cut crowns of the lettuce will regrow for another harvest or two. Cut the rest of your lettuce as needed, but before it gets too large. This way the bed will constantly be regrowing in different stages.

Take your basket of just-picked young lettuces inside right away and very gently wash and dry them and chill in a plastic vegetable bag in the refrigerator. Enjoy soon as these little leaves don't have the keeping quality of mature heads. The baby leaves are wonderfully delicate and succulent. Plan on dressing them with a light and simple vinaigrette that doesn't overwhelm their sweet flavors and juicy textures. Add a sprinkle of fresh chopped salad herbs to toss with the pretty leaves just before you sit down at the table.

Mesclun lettuces are a cool season crop. Grow in spring through early summer and start another crop in early fall. Seeds just won't germinate well when the temperature of the soil and air regularly go above 80 degrees. Keep the soil in your bed or containers evenly moist as that will produce the sweetest, most succulent leaves from plants that grow quickly and without interruption. If you want to extend the salad season into hot weather, erect a canopy of shade cloth over the lettuce bed to moderate hot conditions. It is also helpful to chill the seeds in the refrigerator overnight and plant at night so you have the coolest hours for seed to begin to sprout. Plan to harvest baby lettuces in the cool of the morning or in the evening after the heat of the day. Growing staggered crops is a good way to have a constant supply of ready to eat salad.

## Enjoying the harvest

Don't overwhelm these carefully nurtured leaves with store bought dressings! Even those so called "gourmet brands" tend to be over- seasoned and too heavy in taste to really complement your garden's bounty.

### ***Classic Mesclun Dressing:***

If you are in a hurry, here is my fast and delicious simple vinaigrette recipe that never fails to satisfy:

Combine in a glass jar with a lid –1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons best quality balsamic vinegar and 5 tablespoons best quality fruity olive oil. Add 1/2 teaspoon prepared Dijon mustard, a pinch of salt and 6 or 7 generous grinds of fresh black pepper. Put on the jar lid and shake well. The mustard will serve to emulsify the vinegar and oil. Shake again and pour sparingly over the salad at the table and toss. If you want to dress it up a bit, sprinkle over some toasted pine nuts and chopped fresh chives and parsley. (Keep unused, left-over dressing in a cool place to use up in a week or so. Don't stint on the quality of the oil and vinegar - buy the very best you can afford!)

Here is another salad recipe that shows off your Mesclun.

### ***Mesclun Salad With Walnuts & Grapes***

The sweet flavors and mouth-filling textures of freshly harvested Mesclun lettuces tossed with juicy grapes and toasted nuts make a memorable salad combination.

#### **Dressing:**

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
2 teaspoons grated orange zest  
3 tablespoons orange juice  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon  
6 tablespoons olive oil  
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

1 quart mixed mesclun lettuces, washed and dried  
1 cup red Flame or other seedless red grapes  
1/3 cup chopped toasted walnuts

In a small bowl, combine vinegar, orange zest, juice and tarragon. Add oil gradually, whisking until thoroughly combined. Place Mesclun in a salad bowl and toss with dressing. Sprinkle grapes and nuts over salad just before serving.

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