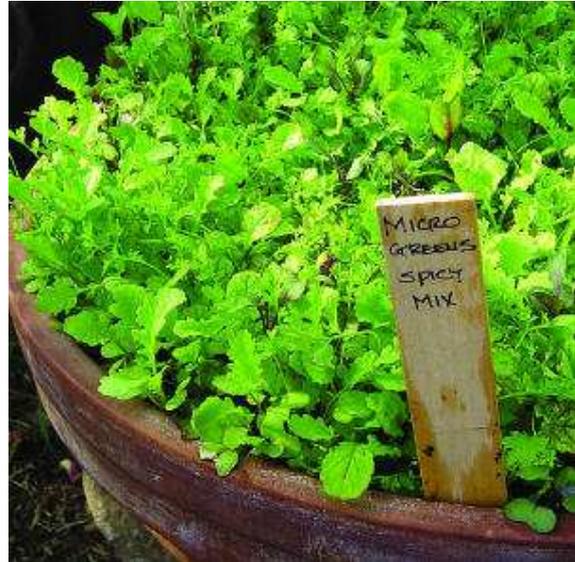


## **MICROGREENS: There is a cure for the winter time blues.**

**by Melissa Oothout**

We have another slushy week coming up. It's definitely time to get your gardening on by seeding indoors. We are still a few weeks away from starting the big players for our veggie garden. The Farmer's Almanac says that the official start date in our zone for tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower is March 12th. We will discuss strategies for seed starting success in a week or so. But **RIGHT NOW**, you can and you should, grow fresh nutrient packed micro greens indoors.



Gourmet restaurants have been using micro greens for years to dress up their dishes, but it's so easy to grow them yourself, at home, in a sunny windowsill. Unlike sprouts, micro greens are vegetables or herbs that are grown in a shallow container of soil and harvested when the first shoots are still small and immature. In this tender young stage, nutrients are concentrated, textures are delicate, and you can enjoy the essence of each flavor. They add great flavor to creamy soups, mashed potatoes, cream cheese spreads on crackers, salads, sandwiches, and Asian dishes. I recently filled the bottom of a terrarium with a thin layer of soil and a layer of seeds and I now have a gorgeous centerpiece of greens that I don't even want to snip because I love to look at them.

Once you realize that micro greens are indispensable in the kitchen, you can get really adventurous and try growing individual varieties. Amaranth, arugula, beets, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, radish, and sorrel are all great vegetables that can be harvested as micro greens. Some excellent herbs to try include basil, cress, dill, marjoram, oregano, and watercress.

While it is important to wait to start your summer harvested veggie seeds, the time for growing peas is now. I always get a jump start on my peas, both gorgeous, fragrant sweet peas as well as tender edible ones. I actually thrive on being the first of the year to do this. The competitive gardener in me **JUMPED** right on this when I heard what Wayne Mezitt is up to...

*This weekend I decided to sow my peas in 2 formats: in the soil in my backyard hoop-tent, and also indoors in flats. Last year my pea seed*

*sown in the hoop-tent germinated erratically. I recently read about this indoor technique, and it sounds like a reasonable approach. Peas reportedly germinate best at temperatures between 45 and 65 degrees F., but poorly above 75 degrees. They also need uniformly moist, not waterlogged soil (which can cause them to rot). Since they don't require light for initial germination (a week or so), I'm setting the flats in my cool cellar to germinate; when they show green shoots, I'll put them in a sunny window. I've also used an inoculant slurry which reportedly better enables peas sown in colder soils to absorb nitrogen from the air, resulting in better yields. You can see in the image that I've separated the flat into sections divided by strips of cardboard. When the seedlings are growing strongly in a few weeks, I'll lift out the entire section and plant it into my garden - by then I'm hoping the garden soil will be at 45 degrees or warmer, encouraging rapid growth, and perhaps an earlier, more uniform crop than those seeds I sowed directly into the ground.*

*-Wayne Mezitt*

