



How to grow your own organic salad in a clamshell container



Reusable, recyclable Earthbound Farm salad clamshell containers make marvelous containers for mini organic lettuce gardens or other plants. The 1-pound size is ideal for growing organic heirloom lettuce seeds, but you can use the 5-ounce size too. You can find organic heirloom lettuce seeds online at sites like JohnnySeeds.com, HeirloomLettuceSeeds.com, and OrganicaSeed.com, or ask your local organic nursery.

What You'll Need

1 package (about 300 mg by weight) heirloom lettuce seeds

1 Earthbound Farm salad clamshell container, 1-pound size (or two 5-ounce clamshells), with lid

1 utility knife or box cutter

Organic starter mix (starter mix contains nutrients that encourage healthier seedlings; look for one without synthetic ingredients or herbicides, or ask your nurseryman to recommend one)

Water in a spray bottle

An extra clamshell container lid for a greenhouse (optional)

A sunny window or protected outside area with partial sun



Planting and Care Instructions

Step 1: Cut Drainage Holes

Start with a clean, dry salad clamshell container with its lid, and set the lid aside. Set the container on a stable cutting surface and cut 4 X's (3 X's for a 5-ounce container) into the bottom, each about 1.5 to 2 inches long and spaced evenly from one end to the other.

Step 2: Add Starter Soil Mix

Add enough organic starter mix to the container to fill it about halfway. (A 1-pound container will take about 5 cups of soil.) Don't use plain dirt from your yard; a starter mix has the proper consistency to retain just the right amount of moisture and allow air circulation, and it also contains nutrients that will feed your lettuce seedlings. Smooth the surface of the soil very lightly; don't pack it down.

Step 3: Add Seeds

You can plant your lettuce seeds in 2 ways:

Add seeds in rows: With your fingers, make three rows down the length of the container, evenly spaced, about 1/8-inch deep. Pour an equal amount of lettuce seeds evenly down the length of each mini-furrow, and then cover the seeds lightly with about 1/16 inch of soil. (If you're using two 5-ounce containers, prepare both soil surfaces and divide the seeds equally between the two.)

OR

Add seeds by broadcasting: Scatter the lettuce seeds evenly across the flat surface of the soil, then sprinkle on more soil to just cover the seeds about 1/16-inch deep.

Extended season (optional): If you're using two 5-ounce containers, you can plant them separately to extend your season. Instead of planting them both at once, plant the first container with half of the seeds, then reserve the rest of the seeds and the second container. About 3 weeks after you plant the first container, plant the second container with the remaining seeds. This will give you a second crop of baby lettuces and a much longer time to enjoy fresh baby lettuces that you grew yourself!



Food to live by.

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(continued)

Step 4: Water the Seeds

Moisten the surface of the soil gently and evenly with the spray bottle. Spray enough water onto the soil to make it a little shiny, but not enough to disturb the soil or expose the seeds.

Step 5: Add the Water Tray

Place the container onto its lid, which will act as a water reservoir. Fill the lid carefully with water. The soil will quickly wick up the water it needs. Refill if necessary, then be sure to check and maintain the water level every day. The soil will draw up the moisture it needs to maintain proper balance, and you won't over-water accidentally.

Step 6: Make a Lid Greenhouse (optional)

You can make an optional greenhouse for your lettuce seedlings with an extra clamshell container lid. On a stable cutting surface, cut 4 X's into the lid (3 for a 5-ounce container), spaced evenly from one end to the other. Open the resulting flaps to allow air circulation, and place the lid on your planted container. The lid will help moderate the temperature and humidity inside the container to help your lettuce seedlings grow. Place the container in a sunny window or a protected outside area that receives partial sun for most of the day. Once the seeds sprout, the leaves will lean toward the sunlight; turn the container 180 degrees each day to keep the plants growing evenly.

If you're planting the seeds in your garden, select a location that gets full sun. After planting, water once a day to moisten until the seeds sprout, then apply 1 inch of water per week to maintain good moisture balance in the soil. Water in the morning or evening to reduce evaporation.

Step 7: Transplant (optional)

If you're starting your lettuce seedlings in the clamshell container but want to finish them in your garden as mature lettuces, you can transplant when the lettuces are about 2 to 3 inches tall.

- Place the well-watered container outside, near where you want to plant them, for 2 to 3 days to give the seedlings a chance to acclimate to their new home (or "harden off") prior to transplanting.
- Transplant in the late afternoon (to take advantage of end-of-day shade) into well-prepared soil. Remove seedlings from the container by tipping it slightly and gently pulling out each individual plant along with as much of its root structure as possible.
- For each seedling, punch a hole into the prepared soil 2 to 4 inches apart (for baby lettuces) or 6 to 8 inches apart (for mature head lettuces). Insert the seedling's roots gently into the hole and pack around them lightly with soil. Water thoroughly. Feed as needed about once a week with an organic fertilizer (check with your local nursery for a brand with no synthetic ingredients) until you're ready to harvest.

Step 8: Harvest

Your baby lettuces are ready to harvest when they're about 3 to 6 inches tall, which should be around 28 to 45 days after planting (or even a little sooner, depending on the weather and how hungry you are). Use a sharp knife or scissors to cut the leaves about 3/4 inch from the soil surface. If you fertilize the plants with a good organic fertilizer after the first harvest and apply plenty of tender loving care, the plant should grow back again for a second harvest (known as "cut and come again").

Step 9: Wash & Enjoy!

Wash your baby lettuces gently in cold water and enjoy!