

Cosmic Mix

Cosmic Mix, our salad mix, one of the first things to become a staple from our garden. You will find it in your share almost every week. Sometimes so much you don't know how much salad you can possibly eat, and then not enough and you kind of go into withdraw! Salad thrives in the Tetons. The weather stays cool so it does not bolt and get tough in the middle of summer. In the early fall it can get a tiny bitter...kind of like me when it is time to let go of summer before I am ready. I worked on a farm in California in my early 20's. Salad of any kind was a challenge to grow. It was just too hot. It stressed the plants. I craved salad, but none tasted the way I wanted it too. I really think a good salad is one of the things that attaches me to the Tetons! Our salad mix has been evolving over the years and it still ebbs and flows with the seasons every year. Sometimes the kale and mustards take center stage, and sometimes the mix is mostly lettuce. We plant the same thing every time all summer...but Mother Nature always gets the final say. The first few weeks of regular salad eating in the spring changes my body; I can feel my cells vibrate with gratitude for fresh food after a winter of frozen and canned goods. My taste buds wake up. See if you can notice the changes as the season goes on. The first few harvests start out with really tender light spring greens; you can taste the sunshine in the leaves! Dress these early mixes with a light dressing. By fall the mix has a bitterer flavor to it, bring out the sweet dressings! The spice of the mix comes and goes depending on the heat in the field.

Lettuce contains the sedative lactucarium which relaxes the nerves without impairing digestion. The vitamin A comes from beta carotene, whose yellow-orange is hidden by green chlorophyll pigments. Beta carotene, of course, is converted to vitamin A in the human body. The darker green, the more beta carotene.

Lettuce was first grown in ancient Rome; the early Romans introduced it to Britain where it became known as *Lactuca sativa* and later "lactuce." *Lactuca* is the milky substance that appears when the lettuce is cut, something you gardeners and our workshares are familiar with. Christopher Columbus introduced lettuce to the new world and the rest is history!

As a general rule, the darker the leaves, the more nutritious the lettuce. Darker leaves have seven to eight times as much beta-carotene, two to four times the calcium and twice the amount of potassium as iceberg lettuce. Lettuce in general, including all the varieties in our Cosmic salad mix, provides small amounts of dietary fiber, some carbohydrates, a little protein and a trace of fat. It's most important nutrients are vitamin A and potassium and lettuce provides a moderately good source of vitamin C, calcium, iron and copper. These vitamins and minerals are located in the leafy part of the lettuce while the spine and ribs contain the dietary fiber. According to the American Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society, foods rich in



vitamin A and C (antioxidants) offer protection against some forms of cancer so eat your leafy greens (and reds) and be as healthy as you can be!

How to use it? Have a salad! Put it on a burrito, on a hamburger, you can even cook it in your scrambled eggs or stir frys, juice extra greens. Please see our link for Salad Dressing too!

