



**“ How To Grow Lettuce Microgreens
Fast And Easy ”**

Kevin Enspiritu

FULL TRANSCRIPT

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“ How To Grow Lettuce Microgreens Fast And Easy ”

Kevin Enspiritu

Marjory: Hello, and welcome to the Homegrown Food Summit. This is Marjory Wildcraft. I'm your host and guide. This is brought to you by The Grow Network, which is the premier community of people who grow our own food, and make our own medicine. I often get requests for how to grow greens, microgreens, and they are fabulous. I actually have some growing right on my countertop right now. I love growing alfalfa sprouts, and radish sprouts, and clover sprouts. It really is an amazing health food because the punch that you can get in nutrition and vibrancy out of those small greens is absolutely amazing. It's definitely one of the 12 keys of things that you want to do if you're having a health crisis, or if you just want to keep maintaining or improving your health. Eating microgreens is huge.

At the very last minute, Kevin Espiritu came in, and he had a really good presentation on it. Actually, we were talking about wow, could ... It wasn't quite up to what we wanted, but it's pretty good. And I said, "You know, I just been wanting to get a video out on growing microgreens for such a long time. Let's go with this. It's pretty good." I just love Kevin's energy and his spirit. He's a self-taught urban gardener. He's focused on teaching, and I love this part, 10 million people how to grow their own food. So Kevin, right on, dude. I'm with you. He's definitely a Grow Network member, right?

He's also the author of The Field Guide to Urban Gardening, which is a primer on getting started with urban food growing, say that fast three times, no matter how small your your living space. As Kevin will point out here, growing greens, you can do it anywhere. You don't need a lot of sunlight. You don't need a lot of space. And, oh my goodness, that salad he made at the end. I'm going to make one of those too. Okay. Watch this with Kevin. I hope it really inspires you.

Kevin: What's going on, everyone? As you can see, I'm growing a little microgreens over here. These are some radishes. And I figured, why not talk about a microgreen that I actually haven't talked about, despite it being one of the more simple ones that you can grow. And this would be, if you can see the seeds there, a basic lettuce salad mix. So, things like classic lettuce, some mizuna, some of the brassica family. Mixing that all together, and then just growing that. You can get a delicious microsalad in anywhere from 10 to 14 days. So easy to grow, does not require any soaking, and the maintenance for this and the growing care is very easy. So, let's go ahead and get started.

The first thing that we're gonna talk about is how much to use. I don't know if you can see. I have a little wine glass here. But, this is about an ounce. And what I've found is that for small seeds, seeds in the, let's say half millimeter diameter, you don't need more than an ounce, and you really don't need less than an ounce. Because any less and you have a very sparse looking tray, any more and they're clumping on each other and they're getting in the way. And then the super microclimate, or you might even call it a nanoclimate, gets really humid, and that's a recipe for mold, which is the number one problem you're probably gonna have when you're growing microgreens. So, with this lettuce mix, let's go ahead and prepare our tray.

Now, when it comes to soil, I've talked about this in many of my other microgreen videos, but you don't need anything with a lot of nutrition. Because the plant's not growing long enough to really pull any nutrition from the soil, so you want a light, friable mixture, that doesn't have a ton of different clumps and clods and things like that. You can see I've screened this through one-fourth inch chicken wire, although you don't need to do that. You could actually just buy a seed starting mix.

What I've found as far as getting it in the tray nice and moistened, is actually if you put your water in first, you're in a better situation. So, I like to do about four cups of water, and if you're using a nice wicking, water retaining material, then it's not a big deal to add the water in at the bottom. If you're using something that's a little too light, what

you'll find is that it actually floats on the top, and it doesn't really get wet. That can be a little bit of an issue. But what I've found is, this doesn't really cause any problems at all, as long as you've got that right mixture.

Now, the one thing that's important here is, again, you can use as cheap ingredients as you want. You can grow this in pure coconut coir if you'd like, and that can be extremely cost-effective, when you are buying those dehydrated bricks. What I've found is a lot of people will like that. The one thing you can run into there is that it is a little moisture-retentive. It can be, sometimes, a little bit too water-retentive, and you can get some of those mold issues if you don't control for that. So just watch out for that, if you are growing in coconut coir.

This is a mixture of, as you can see, a little perlite, a little compost, and some just standard potting soil that I filtered down. The wicking action's gonna moisten all of this for us. All we need to really do is flatten this out. We're gonna give it a light mist before we apply our seeds, and then we're going to tamp the seeds down, make sure that they all have contact with the soil. Then we're putting our blackout dome on, and we'll be back later on to see how they're growing.

All right. So we have our seeds. But the first thing we want to do is make sure that we moisten this material just slightly, so that the seeds have something to stick to as soon as they hit, so we don't have any seed bouncing. You get these weird pockets of seeds that don't really help you out. So, we've got it nice and moist. Then I like to just start from a corner, work my way down, and kind of go in whatever pattern works for you. The real important part here is that you have even coverage. It doesn't necessarily matter the way that you do it, as long as you have nice, even coverage. The last thing you want to do is have weird little pockets of seeds that will all germinate in the exact same place, and will cause pulling, clumping. They'll cause probably mold issues, if you're not careful with watching that. And so, I just like to go careful, go slow, make sure that I get the right amount.

From there, you can kind of just get a sense of the density by the color change on the soil. You know? It's not a big deal. Don't stress. I know that when you're growing microgreens sometimes, or plants in general, a lot of people will stress about, "Oh my gosh, am I doing it right?" Well, there definitely are ways to do it wrong. But it's a pretty cheap experiment here, and if you mess up, just call it growing pains and start over. Not a huge deal.

Now that we've done that, we've got a nice even distribution here, at least as best as we can. I'm gonna give it one more light little mist. And then, you can use any flat material here. I just have a random little floor panel here, so I'm just gonna give it a light tap, just to make sure that the seeds are actually in contact with the soil, so they germinate correctly. I used to have one that was perfectly fitted to this, this tray, but don't have that anymore. Not a big deal, though. Boom. Okay.

Now that we have that, we're ready for the blackout dome. All right. We are in our system now. As you can see, I've rigged up little LED shop light. That's actually not going to be necessary, because what we're doing is we're blacking this out. The blackout dome is partially to account for the fact that these are going to be germinating on the surface of the soil. Now, you could cover this with maybe a quarter-inch of soil, and then moisten that down. I find that it is somewhat helpful. It's not 100% necessary, though. The blackout dome does quite well here.

For lettuce, we're gonna leave the blackout dome for three to five days. Every half day or so, if you can manage that, you're gonna come in and give it a nice spray, check the surface for any mold, and then replace the dome. Now, the only other thing I might add is that you can see here I have a seedling heat mat right here. I put a link in the video description, if that's something that you want to purchase. I find that in colder climates, it really does help speed up germination. But a lot of seeds are relatively tolerant to many different temperature ranges, as far as germination goes. You should be fine right now, especially if you're growing indoors. So we're gonna wait, and we'll be back in three to five days.

All right, my friends. We are at 36 hours on our lettuce mix here. Let's take a peek and see exactly where they are in the process, and if it's time to take the blackout dome off. The moment of truth has arrived. Boom. Pretty solid germination rates here. Remember, we can keep this under blackout for at least two more days. We're gonna want most of these greens to get up to maybe the two-inch mark or so, somewhere around here, before we take the blackout dome off and we start greening them up.

You gotta remember, it's a salad mix, so the germination rate of all of these is actually slightly different, which is why it looks a little spotty. Some of the earlier germinating ones are all up right now. Some of the other ones I can see, if I look, have some root hairs. They're starting, but they're not all the way down, which is why we have to wait, maybe, I would say two more days, before we take it off for good and start greening it up.

It's been about, I would say four more days since we took off the blackout dome. The greens are looking absolutely beautiful. Full tray, perfectly greened up. And the greening happens, really, in I would say anywhere from 24 to 36 hours. You start to see those yellows turn to green. You start to see the real, the true color of the leaf actually come out. Let's take a look at what we're looking at here, and then we'll talk about how to harvest them. And then as a little bonus, I will show you how I personally use a lettuce salad mix micro in the kitchen.

These are absolutely gorgeous. We really haven't waited too long. We could grow these much longer if we wanted to. Just so you know, what you're looking to have happen if you're growing these in a more production way ... Let's say you're growing these for, I don't know, a chef or a restaurant, or even for yourself, if it's something you want. Let me pull one out here. What you're looking to have is the first set of true leaves to appear. Let me put my hand as a background. You can see that tiny little leaf in the middle there. That's the one that you're wanting to grow for, I would say probably two to three more days, if you really wanted to get maximum yield out of this.

Because right now, you're looking at the seed leaves right here, and the true leaf is in the middle. This looks like it might be a kale or something like that. I can't really tell. It's a bit small. But that's gonna be the leaf structure that most of the plant is. These are the seed leaves. Eventually most of these seed leaves are gonna get consumed for nutrition, if the plant's grown to its full size. So, what you could do is you could let this entire tray grow for perhaps two to three more days, and you'd get a little more yield. Certainly you'd get a little more yield. You'd probably get a half-inch more of growth, and you'd get the true leaves coming out on most of them. It's not required.

It really is up to you. Sometimes if I'm trying to turn a tray out quickly ... As I lovingly pet my tray here. Try this. It also feels pretty good just to kind of run your hands along the surface ... But what I like to do sometimes is I'll come through and I'll do a clean cut, and get another tray in. Because these are such quick growers that I'd rather have quicker turnover, rather than waiting til the absolute optimum moment. However, if it's your first time growing, I would recommend waiting until you get those true leaves. As you can see, like this one here doesn't have it. The true leaves aren't there, so it's probably another day or two for that one.

We're gonna go ahead and get to the harvesting now. I know in the previous clip you saw me saying, "Wait two, three more days. You'll get a lot more yield," but I think it's time to harvest. And I honestly wouldn't recommend using the chef's knife. It's just what I've grown accustomed to and what I'm used to, so this scary murder-looking thing is what we're gonna take over here. We'll talk about some harvesting techniques as I slowly make my way through this tray. And then we're gonna throw it in some salad, and have a little dinner.

My recommended technique ... As you can see, the soil level is a little lower than the surface, which is great, because we're gonna sacrifice a little bit of this stem, just to make sure that we have more or less no dirt. Because I don't really want to wash this. I want to work this directly into a salad right away. You know, when I used to work with chefs, they wanted to do the same thing. So, I'm coming through. I'm

just bunching and kind of grasping the tops, and then I'm coming at a slightly downward angle and just chopping through. What's nice about doing it this way is, at least in my opinion, you can use the edge of the tray as a leverage point, and get really nice cuts across the whole thing. And just, boom. We just come through, we slice.

I'm not growing, again, for commercial, so I don't care too much if I get 100 million percent. And I'm pulling. Don't do this. Don't pull. I pulled a little bit out. I don't care if I get one million percent of the yield out of the tray. I'm okay sacrificing a little bit, because again, this ends up going into my compost, this soil right here. So it's not a huge deal if I have a tiny bit left here. Not a big deal, especially if you let it grow a little taller.

For those of you who really aren't a fan of the chef's knife method, I have another funny method for you. Of course, you could just use scissors. I'm not just doing this to be ridiculous. You could use scissors, but we're gonna use some grass shears. I mean, this is a grass. It's growing in a matted format. It's more or less like a grass. I don't know about you, but that works pretty darn well to me, so we are going to grass clip this microgreen bed right here.

Pretty good harvest, right? I don't know about you, but for one tray, a whole colander full, probably somewhere around six to seven ounces ... It's under yield if you're growing for production, but these days I just grow for myself. I want to cook for myself. I want these fast. And the seeds are so cheap. When you're growing a spicy lettuce mix, or even just any type of lettuce mix, the seeds are so cheap that you can afford to be a little more liberal with them, especially if you buy in five, even 10 pound bags. If you know you like the mix like I like this, why not? The price goes way, way, way down, so you kind of pretend like you're a commercial microgreen grower just for yourself, and you get all these nutritious greens.

I'm about to go into the kitchen. I think my pot might be boiling, or boiling over right now. I've got some ravioli in there. We're gonna throw this into a quick salad, and just enjoy it out here on the patio.

All right. I didn't actually have some of the stuff I wanted, so let's just talk about this real quick. Simple salad, especially when you do something really spicy like this. I like to cut the spice down a little bit. I'm personally not a fan of just one ... Even if it's a mix, it's an overall spicier mix, so I need to cut that down. The way I do that is I add some olive oil, and then typically I would cut a fresh lemon and squeeze some lemon juice in there as well. Don't really have that. I'm gonna use the next best thing, some sort of red wine vinegar. We'll see how that works. Classic salt and pepper. It's really that simple.

That's probably enough for me. You can see we've got at least four more little microsalads right there, if not more, and this is just one tray of one type of micro, guys. I'm telling you, this stuff is the secret in urban gardening, in my opinion. A lot of people just undervalue this, and there is no human being that is unable to grow microgreens, I'll just tell you that. Unless you're living in, like, Plato's cave or something. Unless you do not have a physical home. And even, honestly, if you're homeless, you could grow microgreens. Not advocating it. There's probably more things, more pressing matters to attend to, but it's not impossible.

We're gonna throw a little bit of this in. Don't put that side in. You can honestly, as long as you cut down that spice just a little bit, you can throw in whatever you want. Normally I would go out to the herb garden, throw some herbs in here. I would get some of my bunching onions. I just want to do this quick and easy for you guys. I always go a little hard on the olive oil, personally. Give it a quick little toss, incorporation. Another pro tip on this is some shredded fresh Parmesan cheese. Oh. If the olive oil cuts down the spiciness a little bit, the shredded Parmesan brings in the creaminess, and that is the killer combo, in my opinion. So, I'd recommend that. I might also throw some mushrooms in here, if I was a little more prepared, but this is just showing you how to make a very quick microsalad. Let's go ahead and get our ravioli ready, and then we'll eat.

Couldn't resist. I got some truffle and porcini mushroom ravioli. We went a little bougie. We went a little fancy. These are like precooked. It's nothing fancy here, guys. I'm just trying to show some practical

stuff you can do with greens, even if you're just a normal human being just like me. Boom. Done. Wait five minutes, ready to eat.

While our ravioli is boiling, how do you store them? There's a lot of ways. The general rule of thumb is store them as dry as possible. Give them a little bit of moisture. You can put like a damp paper towel that's been relatively squeezed out of moisture. I like these keep fresh bags. I can put a link in the description if you want. Really good for preserving produce, in my opinion, and this is some produce. We don't want this to go bad. I'm just gonna stuff this in the bag. It'll usually keep anywhere from seven to 10 days. Although, you know, use it as quickly as possible. That's my general rule of thumb. But dry. If you store it wet, it will mold out, it will rot out, and it will be disgusting, so do not store it wet.

There we go. It is now time to get down and eat this thing. Crack my coconut water. Fix the cam. Well, this is pretty much it, guys. If you want to leave now, probably a good time, because I'm just gonna be riffing on microgreens while I taste test them right now. Let's go ahead and give them a try. It's the most basic, bare bones microgreens salad you can have, but it's refreshing. It's not gonna get any fresher than this. You know, these plants are ... Let's see, 15 minutes old, as far as their harvest date. How is it ever gonna get fresher than that? It is not. And the spiciness has been cut down by that olive oil, although I think some shredded Parmesan would really work here. That's what I would do, personally. I'd also add some other herbs, some other vegetables, make it a true salad. But, absolutely delicious.

I just want to show you guys how easy it is to have fresh produce at your house, no matter where you live. This is, yeah, the Epic Gardening headquarters. Pretty big. But it doesn't have to be. I did this when I was growing downtown San Diego in an apartment/condo sort of thing, in the middle of the city. Completely possible. And just if you have any questions, leave them in the comments. You could always go to epicgardening.com and check out some of the microgreens tutorials and grow guides I have over there. Check out some of the other microgreens videos on the channel.

Check out some of the other videos on the channel. Check out the podcasts. There's the daily podcast. Check out the Instagram community. That's kind of where I share some of the behind the scenes stuff, some of the more beautiful gardening shots that you guys might know and love.

Until next time, guys. I'm gonna keep enjoying this, take a sip of my coco water, enjoy this delicious ravioli. I'll see you in the next video. Good luck in the garden, and keep on growing.

Marjory: Okay, that's awesome. And if you click that button on the right there, that will get you in touch with Kevin. I think he's got the recipe there. He's definitely got a lot of other really, really great videos, and I certainly want to help Kevin with his goal of getting 10 million people growing their own food. I'm like, "Yeah. Right on." The Grow Network's logo, or not logo, but our catalyzing statement is homegrown food on every table. So, we are kindred spirits here. And yeah, he is just so much fun. Just so young and bubbly, and I love it.

Click on that button to the right there and that'll get you in touch with Kevin. The button down below that, woo hoo. You can own all of these presentations for the summit, but more importantly, you'll be supporting this movement, and super appreciate your purchase. So, if you click that button down below, that will get you to be able to purchase the whole entire summit package. Plus, we do have a special sweepstakes with all kinds of really cool prizes, and if you pick that up now, you'll automatically be entered to win the sweepstakes. This is Marjory Wildcraft, and woo. Let's get together with another presentation.