



Harvest of the Month

Asian Greens



Botany

All Asian greens are from the Brassica family and genus, and most are even the same species (*Brassica rapa*). Only mustard is a different species (*Brassica juncea*). They share many common characteristics; cool weather tolerance, edible at many different stages of growth, and highly nutritious. Some, like mustard and mizuna, are heat tolerant as well.

Fun Fact

All Asian greens can be used raw as salad greens or lightly cooked. Some of these greens include: mustards, mizuna, komatsuna, pac choy/bok choy and tatsoi.

Social Sciences

These greens are ancient crops from Asian countries, and represent a tangible link to heritage, with heirloom seeds carrying memories of specific landscapes, climates, and community tastes.



Bok Choy
(Pak Choi)

ASIAN GREENS



Gai Lan
(Chinese Broccoli)



Napa Cabbage
(Chinese Cabbage)



Mizuna



Komatsuna



Tatsoi

Verde Asiático
means Asian green in Spanish.

Nutrition

Asian greens are rich in Vitamin A and C, Calcium, Iron and Potassium, and several cancer preventing phytochemicals. Pac choi especially is high in beta-carotene. Studies have shown people who eat a lot of Brassicas have lower cancer rates than those who don't.

Growing Tips

Mustards and mizuna are fast-growing cool weather crops. Plant them so they mature as the days get longer and warmer. Some varieties will keep producing through the summer if given adequate water. Plant again in late Summer for a Fall crop. They can be harvested as baby leaf greens for adding to salad mixes, or as full-sized leaves for cooking. Mustard greens have a spicy flavor profile while mizuna has a much milder flavor. Mizuna is a common ingredient in baby salad mixes.

Komatsuna and tatsoi can be used in place of spinach in almost any recipe if harvested as baby leaves. They have similar growing needs as other Asian brassica greens; they do best in cool weather and have moderate fertility needs, and need a pH just slightly on the acidic side.

Pac choi/bok choy is the most temperamental of the Asian greens. This crop is usually grown to be harvested after it "heads up" so there are many of the thick, succulent white midribs of the leaves. However, it is prone to bolting if stressed; stress can take the form of weather that is too warm, weather that is too cold, transplants that are root bound, plants too close together, or uneven watering. Give pac choi the best chance by planting it early in the Spring or late in the Summer, direct seeding or getting transplants in the ground before they have reached the limits of their growing pots, thinning to the appropriate spacing for the variety you are growing, and keeping the soil consistently moist.

If the plants do bolt, the flower stems can be harvested and eaten similarly to broccolini.

