VEGETABLES · A PATIO OR BALCONY IN COOL WEATHER

Let's grow spinach.

Spinacia oleracea

This plan is for **Leaf spinach**

Four plants. One pot. Fresh greens.

12 × 12 × 12 in. **8 seeds → 4 plants**

Before you start

Start outdoors during a cool spring or fall spell; summer heat can make spinach flower before you get many leaves.

By jennyzhuang

Sources checked September 25, 2026 View sources ↗

LIGHT

Sun or light shade

Use a sunny spot; give afternoon shade when days warm up.

WATER

Evenly moist

Keep roots moist, without leaving the pot sitting in water.

FEEDING

Steady nutrition

Start with enriched potting mix. Extra fertilizer can wait.

BEFORE YOU START

Your little kit.

- ✓ One draining planter, 12 inches square and 12 inches deep inside for this shopping allowance
- ✓ Buy 1 × 1 cu ft bag. Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US). A watering can; keep any leftover mix.
- ✓ 8 spinach seeds, or 4 small nursery transplants

THE SOIL

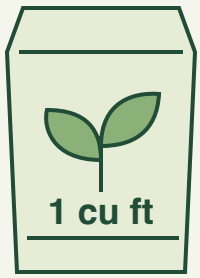
Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US), 1 cu ft bag, SKU 78951430. Includes starter nutrients; follow the current bag's feeding directions.

Start with what's on this list. Add plant food only when the feeding section says it's needed.

TAKE THIS TO THE GARDEN CENTER

What to buy, and how much.

Buy 1 × 1 cu ft bag.



ORGANIC POTTING MIX

1 bag

Leave room at the rim.
Keep spare mix.

Bag-count illustration; not retail packaging. Match the product name and size below.

LOOK FOR THIS BAG	Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US) 1 cu ft bag · about 28.3 L · SKU 78951430
MIX TO BUDGET FOR	Budget up to 26 L (0.92 cu ft).

Worked example: a straight-sided planter with INSIDE dimensions of 12 × 12 × 12 inches, filled to 1 inch below the rim. A tapered pot or nursery starts use less fresh mix. If your planter is deeper, check its capacity before buying.

Before adding fertilizer: Fresh mix includes starter nutrients. Skip extra fertilizer at planting. Follow the feeding directions on your actual bag; “up to 2 months” is not a guaranteed waiting period. Do not combine the starter program with another full feed.

If your pot is a different size

Before planting, measure loose mix into the empty pot with a marked 1 US gallon container, up to the intended fill line. Record the volume, then remove enough mix to fit the nursery root ball. A nursery pot marked “#3” or “trade gallon” is not a measured US gallon. Leave space for watering; keep spare mix for later.

Use the bag’s cubic feet or liters to compare volumes. A dry quart on a soil bag is larger than a liquid quart on a measuring jug.

Compare all four starter shopping lists →

YOUR SIMPLE GROWING PLAN

One pot. Here's the plan.

A patio or balcony in cool weather. Start with **seeds**.

THE POT

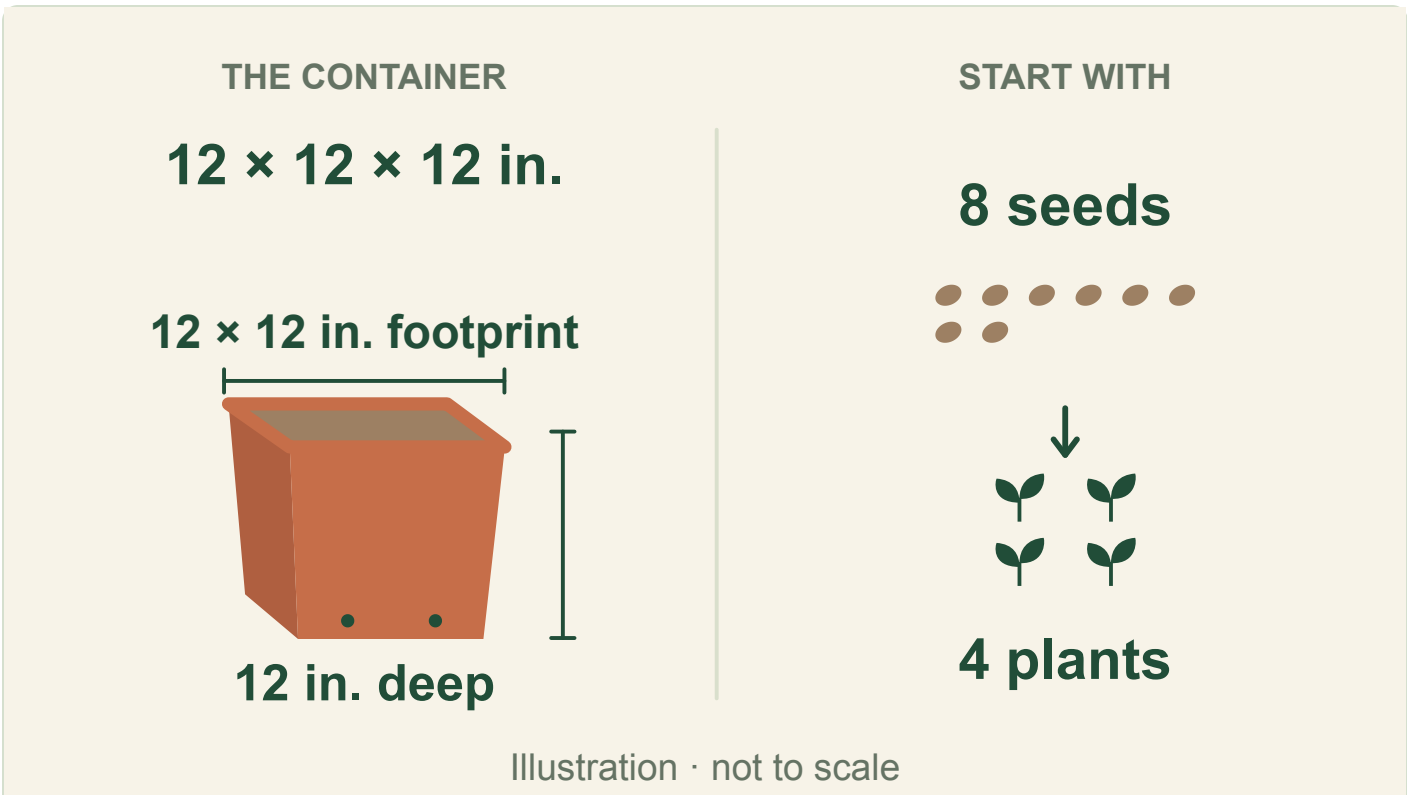
12 × 12 × 12 in.

One square planter with drainage holes. The shopping calculation uses inside dimensions.

HOW MANY

8 seeds → 4 plants

Two seeds per spot, in a 2 × 2 grid, 6 inches apart.



12 × 12 × 12 in. · 8 seeds → 4 plants One square planter with drainage holes. The shopping calculation uses inside dimensions. Two seeds per spot, in a 2 × 2 grid, 6 inches apart. Original illustration; not to scale.

01

Fill and wet the mix

Leave 1 inch below the rim. Water gently so the mix is evenly damp.

02

Plant four little pairs

Place 2 seeds in each of 4 spots, 6 inches apart. Cover with ½ inch of mix.

03

Keep the surface moist

Check each morning. Add a gentle sprinkle whenever the surface starts drying.

04

Give each plant room

When seedlings have 3–4 true leaves, snip the weaker plant at each spot. Keep 4 plants.

Help with the setup: drainage holes and saucers · potting mix vs. garden soil.

Other ways to start

Use nursery starts

Plant 4 small spinach starts at the same 6-inch spacing. Keep each root ball intact and plant at its existing soil level. Direct sowing avoids transplant disturbance.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

Water & fertilizer at a glance.

WATER WHEN

Check each morning. Water as the mix starts drying; wait if damp. Wet the root zone and let excess drain.

FERTILIZER

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

AMOUNT

1½ tablespoons in 1½ US gallons of water

WHAT THAT AMOUNT COVERS

Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on.

HOW OFTEN TO FEED

Every 14 days during active growth.

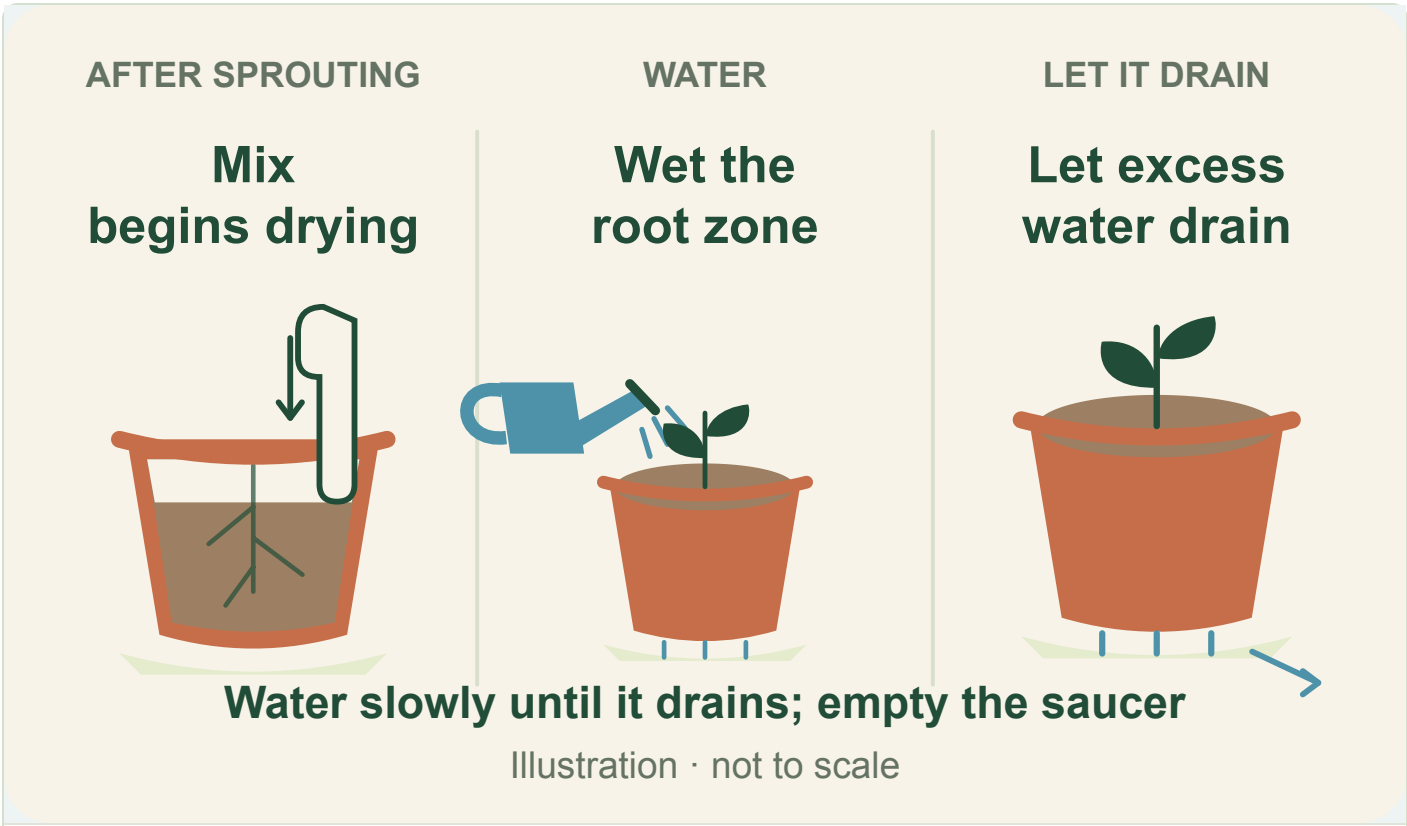
WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

Skip extra feed at planting. Follow your potting-mix bag's starter-feeding directions before adding this routine; "up to 2 months" is not a fixed waiting period. Feed only while actively growing. A short crop may finish without extra feed.

01 / EVERYDAY CARE

When to water.

Check every morning. Once seedlings are up, feel the mix: water when it starts to dry; skip it when still damp. Water the soil slowly until a little runs out below, then empty the saucer.



Check before watering. Check each morning. Water as the mix starts drying; wait if damp. Wet the root zone and let excess drain. Original illustration; not to scale.

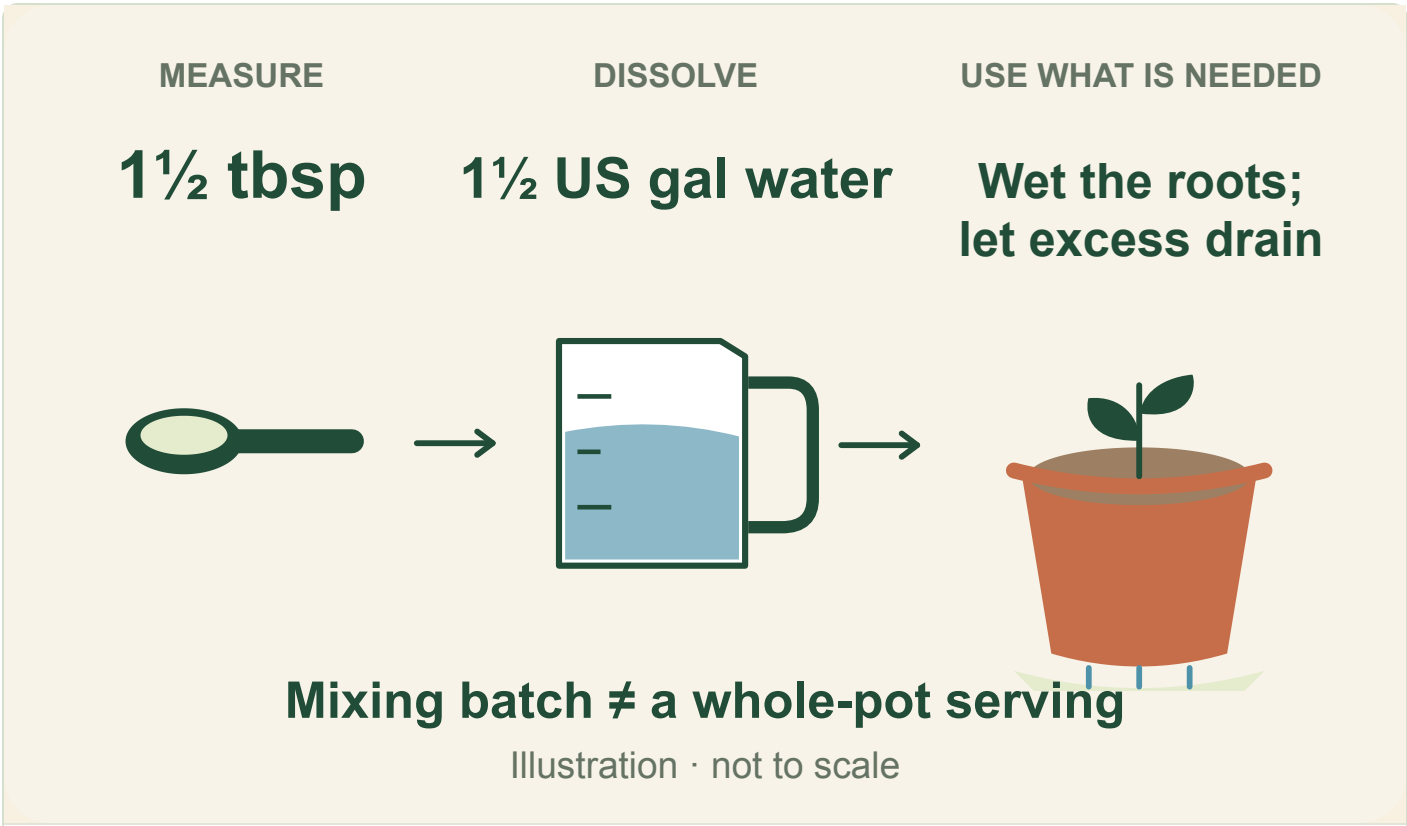
> **The easy rule**
>
> Check first. Water only when the plant needs it.

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02 / PLANT FOOD

Exactly what to feed it.

Skip extra fertilizer at planting. Check the potting-mix bag's feeding directions before starting the later routine below. "Feeds for up to 2 months" is a product claim, not a guaranteed two-month waiting period. Do not stack fertilizer programs. A short spinach crop may finish without extra feed.



1½ tablespoons in 1½ US gallons of water Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on. Every 14 days during active growth. Skip extra feed at planting. Follow your potting-mix bag's starter-feeding directions before adding this routine; "up to 2 months" is not a fixed waiting period. Feed only while actively growing. A short crop may finish without extra feed. Original illustration; not to scale.

US PRODUCT REFERENCE



Miracle-Gro

Water Soluble All Purpose

24-8-16

Soluble: mix into water

Check the official US product ↗

Illustrated reference; check the manufacturer's current packaging and US label.

A SPECIFIC US PRODUCT

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

If you keep the crop growing after the starter feed runs out, mix 1½ tablespoons of the US 24-8-16 product into 1½ gallons of water. Apply at the roots every 14 days while actively growing. Use only enough to wet this pot and drain; do not empty the whole can into it.

Check the manufacturer's product page ↗

Use the named US 24-8-16 formulation. Optional later purchase: one 1.5 lb pack. This is a conventional soluble fertilizer; the organic potting mix does not make the entire feeding plan organic. The mixing batch is not a per-pot watering dose.

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03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Sprouting and picking leaves

Look for sprouts in about 7–10 days when the soil is 55–65°F. Start picking outside leaves when they are big enough for your kitchen.

Choose a cool sowing window

Choose a cool spell in spring or fall. Hot weather and lengthening days encourage bolting; a city-specific planting date comes from your local Extension office.

For regional planting windows, find your local Cooperative Extension office ↗.

Something looking off?

My spinach is growing a tall flower stalk.

It is bolting. Pick the usable leaves now, then start a fresh crop in cooler weather. More fertilizer will not reverse flowering.

Can I grow spinach from a cut stem?

Use seeds or nursery transplants for this plan. A grocery-store spinach leaf is not a reliable way to start a crop.

Do I need acidic fertilizer?

No. Do not add an acidifier just because the plant needs nutrients. Fertility and soil acidity are different questions.

Spacing and harvesting

Space and thin the seedlings

This is an intentionally simple container recipe: a 12-inch square pot, four planting positions, and two seeds per position before thinning. The pot size and spacing follow RHS guidance; the four-position layout is our editorial adaptation, not a tested yield claim.

Pick outer leaves and resow after bolting

Harvest outer leaves and leave the growing center intact. If the plant bolts or the leaves become bitter, finish the crop and sow again when conditions cool.

BEHIND THIS GUIDE

Where the advice comes from.

Plant care is based on the sources below. Planting layouts and beginner routines combine that guidance into one practical plan; they are editorial choices, not results from a Plant Care Steps growing trial.

- RHS: container size and spacing ↗
  https://www.rhs.org.uk/vegetables/spinach/grow-your-own
- Utah State University: sowing and germination ↗
  https://extension.usu.edu/yardandgarden/research/spinach-in-the-garden
- University of Maryland: container care ↗
  https://extension.umd.edu/resource/growing-vegetables-containers-and-salad-tables
- Manufacturer: starter feed in the named potting mix ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/potting-mix/miracle-gro-organic-potting-mix/78951430.html
- Volume conversion ↗
  https://www.nist.gov/pml/special-publication-811/nist-guide-si-appendix-b-conversion-factors/nist-guide-si-appendix-b8
- Manufacturer: US fertilizer formula and application directions ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/plant-food-and-care/miracle-gro-water-soluble-all-purpose-plant-food.html

Something needs updating? Suggest a correction

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Compiled with AI assistance. These first-edition guides have not yet had an independent horticultural review. Read our editorial approach.