



**Kevin Milaeger**

*Milaeger's*

## February's Climatological Shift

Kevin Milaeger

**Mid-February is a tipping point** in our local weather. At that time the average high temperature creeps above freezing for the first time. Spring is then only about a month away, and the temperature change is a reminder we are moving toward the green season. The average low temperature will move above freezing during the last week of March, and by that time we will have our first crop of greens, so you can start your gardening season. We call this program "Greens to Grow." These hardy young "greens" are all tolerant of cool weather, and they will be at the ideal stage for



transplanting into your garden or container. This year we have completely updated our variety listing. We now have about twenty kinds of lettuce, and almost all of them are new. Most are leaf lettuce or Romaine. The leaves on these are mostly upright, so they are less likely to be flecked with dirt. On some low growing types, if the leaves are crinkled, it's hard to wash off the dirt. (Farmers put down plastic to prevent this problem.) We are always searching for superior red leaved lettuces, as they are the most nutritious kind. We have eight kinds this year. They also add color to your table, and visual delight is important, too.



**butterhead lettuce 'Yugoslavia Red'**

I've heard it said that lettuce doesn't have much flavor. Most of us rarely eat lettuce by itself so it's hard to judge. The flavor is definitely mild, and is usually over shadowed by the other vegetables that are often part of the salad mix. This is why mustard greens are such an important part



*photo: ivygarth.com*

of a great salad. These valuable greens suffer from having the word "mustard" in their name---they don't taste like mustard at all, to me. But they do have a flavorful "bite," which adds so much to the salad. Keep in mind that the "bite" I speak of does not linger, like that of a hot pepper. It is gone in seconds, and leaves me wanting more. When you visit our stores, feel free to sample a bit of the mustard (and also the Mizuna, a mustard relative) and you will be pleasantly surprised. I treat mustard and mizuna like I do

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**mustard 'Garnet Giant'**

are planning to serve kale raw, I find that it is best picked when young, when it is most tender and the flavor is mild.

We have found the most important thing to remember in salad gardening is to plant as wide a variety of greens as possible. They all grow at different rates, and of course they all taste different. You want plenty of options, and with a big variety, you will always have an interesting salad. [Here is a link](#) to a chart of this year's greens.

Please email me ([kevin@milaegers.com](mailto:kevin@milaegers.com)) if you have any questions or comments.



**oakleaf lettuce 'Breen'**

kale----I add only a small amount to the salad, just enough to make you pause and enjoy, as you taste it.

We all know that kale has exceptional nutritional value, so our kale selection has been increased to five kinds. We offer these in "3 paks" so you could try, say, fifteen plants, three of each variety. This is a good gardening strategy because they mature at different rates, they taste different, and they look different. That way, you shouldn't ever run out. You many want to try a medley as part of your salad. Some folks like a salad made entirely of kale, but I generally keep the kale portion to under ten percent of the greens. If you

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**kale 'Scarlet'**