

GROWING EDIBLE SPROUTS AT HOME

H. C. HARRISON

Sprouts are shoots of germinated seeds. They are excellent sources of protein, vitamins, and minerals. You can use sprouts raw in salads and on sandwiches, stir fry them, or cook them in vegetable dishes, soups, stews and casseroles. The most common types of seeds used for sprouting are alfalfa, mung bean, soybean, lentil, cabbage, radish, and rye seeds.

BUYING SEEDS

If you grow edible sprouts at home, be sure you buy only those seeds labeled for sprouting. This is important since garden seeds usually have been treated with fungicides which can be harmful if eaten.

Seeds for sprouting are generally available from health food stores, the produce section of many grocery stores, and garden centers.

GROWING SPROUTS

Although there are several ways to sprout seeds, the most common is the “soak, rinse, and drain” method. For this method, you need seeds, a glass canning or jelly jar, a screw-top ring, and cheesecloth or fine wire mesh (preferably stainless steel or aluminum) cut to the size of the screw-top ring. A wide-mouth jar and rim covered with wire mesh work best.

After you’ve gathered the needed equipment, follow these steps to grow sprouts by the soak, rinse, and drain method:

- (1) Thoroughly clean jars, then place the desired amount of seeds in the bottom of the jar (see table of suggested seeds for growing edible sprouts). Use a separate jar for each seed type. Cover the mouth of the jar with a piece of cheesecloth or fine meshed wire. Secure the top with a screw-top ring, or you can use a rubberband if using cheesecloth.

- (2) Rinse the seeds with cold water and then drain. The cheesecloth or wire mesh will prevent the seeds from washing away.
- (3) Fill the jar with lukewarm water; the volume of water should be twice that occupied by the seeds. Soak the seeds for 12 to 24 hours.
- (4) Drain off the water. Then rinse the seeds with lukewarm water and thoroughly drain them. (Do not leave the seeds in water from this point on.)
- (5) Keep the jar in a dark place at room temperature (68° to 72°F). An easy way to ensure darkness is simply to cover the jar with aluminum foil (but not the top). Put the jar on your kitchen counter top, back under the upper cabinets to help prevent light from entering the top of the jar.
- (6) Lay the jar on its side to distribute the seeds more evenly.
- (7) Continue to rinse the seeds two to four times a day with water at room temperature until the sprouts are the desired length, usually 2 to 5 days. Always be sure to drain off all excess water. Otherwise, the seeds will ferment and spoil.

Once the sprouts are ready, rinse them thoroughly. If you want to remove the seed husks, place the sprouts in a pan of water, stir gently, and remove the seed coats as they float to the surface.

To “green up” sprouts, put them in a sunny window for a few hours. However, don’t leave them in the light too long or they will become tough and bitter.

STORING SPROUTS

You can keep unused sprouts in a sealed bag or jar in the refrigerator for about 2 weeks. To freeze sprouts, blanch them over vigorous steam for 3 minutes, then cool quickly by placing them in ice water. Drain and pack the sprouts in freezer containers or bags, and seal tightly.

Suggested seeds for growing edible sprouts.

SEED	DESIRED SPROUT LENGTH	AVERAGE SPROUTING TIME*	SPROUT YIELD (for desired lengths)		CAN BE EATEN RAW	AVERAGE COOKING TIME	NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION
			SEEDS USED	SPROUTS OBTAINED			
ADZUKI	½-1 inch	4-5 days	¼ cup	1 cup	Yes	8-12 minutes	
ALFALFA	Seed length	1-2 days	1 cup	2½ cups	Yes	3-5 minutes	35% protein; four of the eight essential amino acids; many minerals; vitamins D and E.
BARLEY	Seed length	3-5 days	½ cup	1 cup	No	8-10 minutes	B-vitamins; minerals; protein.
BEAN	½-1½ inches	3-5 days	¼ cup	1¼ cups	Yes	8-15 minutes	20-25% protein; many minerals; vitamins B and C.
CABBAGE, BROCCOLI, BRUSSELS SPROUT, CAULIFLOWER, KALE	½-1 inch	3-5 days	¼ cup	1¼ cups	Yes	3-8 minutes	
CHIA	⅛-½ inch	1-2 days	¼ cup	1 cup	Yes		
CHICKPEA (garbanzo)	¾-1 inch	5-8 days	1 cup	3½ cups	Yes	10-20 minutes	20% protein; vitamins A, B, and C; minerals.
FENUGREEK	½ inch	3-4 days	¼ cup	1 cup	Yes	2-4 minutes	
LENTIL	¼-½ inch	3-4 days	1 cup	2 cups	No	3-8 minutes	25% protein; vitamins A, B, C, and E; rich in minerals.
MILLET	Seed length	3-5 days	1 cup	2½ cups	No	8-10 minutes	Protein; B-vitamins; many minerals.
MUNG BEAN	½-3 inches	3-8 days	1 cup	4 cups	Yes	2-5 minutes	Protein; vitamins A, B, and C; many minerals.
PEA	¼-½ inch	3-4 days	1 cup	2 cups	No	3-8 minutes	22% protein; all essential amino acids.
RADISH	½-1 inch	2-4 days	1 tbsp	¾ cup	Yes		Spicy flavor; contains various vitamins and minerals.
RICE	Seed length	3-4 days	1 cup	2½ cups	No	8-10 minutes	7% protein; all essential amino acids; vitamins A, B, and C; many minerals.
SESAME	Budded only	2-3 days	¼ cup	⅓ cup	No	Oven roast	
SOYBEAN	¾-1 inch	4-6 days	1 cup	3½ cup	Yes	10-20 minutes	40% protein; vitamins A, B, and C; many minerals
SUNFLOWER	Budded only	5-8 days	1 cup	2 cups	No	Oven roast	24% protein; vitamins A and B; many minerals.
TRITICALE	Seed length	1-3 days	1 cup	3 cups	Yes	8-10 minutes	
WHEAT	Seed length	4-5 days	1 cup	4 cups	Yes	8-10 minutes	

*Time is dependent upon room temperature.

Author: H. C. Harrison is professor of horticulture, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension. Produced by Cooperative Extension Publications.

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