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Best Shade-Tolerant Vegetables

Even in shady conditions, you can bask in great garden harvests if you choose the right crops and make a few easy adjustments.

By Colleen Vanderlinden

When considering which crops to grow in shady areas, think of them in terms of leaves and roots. Crops we grow for their leaves (kale, lettuce, spinach) and those we grow for their roots (beets, carrots, turnips) will do fairly well in partially shady conditions. (The crops we grow for their fruits — such as eggplants, peppers and tomatoes — really do need at least six hours of full sun per day.)

To learn more about how to grow crops in shady gardens, check out [Best Vegetables to Grow in the Shade](#).

Crop	Shade Notes	Growing Tips
Arugula	At least three to four hours of sun per day.	Arugula welcomes shade, as this crop is prone to bolting as soon as the weather turns warm if in full sun.
Asian greens	At least two hours of sun per day.	Asian greens such as bok choy (also spelled "pac choy" and "pak choy"), komatsuna and tatsoi will grow wonderfully with a couple hours of sun plus some bright shade or ambient light.
Chard	If you grow chard mainly for its crisp stalks, you will need at least five hours of sun per day; if you grow it mainly for the tender baby leaves, three to four hours of sun per day will be enough.	Expect chard grown in partial shade to be quite a bit smaller than that grown in full sun. Baby chard leaves are excellent cooked or served raw in salads.
Culinary herbs	At least three hours of sun per day.	While many culinary herbs need full sun, chives, cilantro, garlic chives, golden marjoram, lemon balm, mint, oregano and parsley will usually perform well in shadier gardens.
Kale	At least three to four hours of sun per day.	You'll notice only a small reduction in growth if comparing kale grown in partial shade with kale grown in full sun.
Lettuce	At least three to four hours of sun per day.	Lettuce is perfect for shadier gardens because the shade protects it from the sun's heat, preventing it from bolting as quickly. Often, the shade can buy a few more weeks of harvesting time that you'd get from lettuce grown in full sun.
Mesclun	One of the best crops for shady gardens. Grows in as little as two hours of sun per day and handles dappled shade well.	The delicate leaves of this salad mix can be harvested in about four weeks, and as long as you leave the roots intact, you should be able to get at least three good harvests before you have to replant.
Mustard greens	At least three hours of sun per day for baby mustard greens.	Mustard grown for baby greens is best-suited for shady gardens.
Peas and beans	At least four to five hours of sun.	If growing these crops in partial shade, getting a good harvest will take longer. Try bush and dwarf varieties rather than pole varieties.
Root vegetables	At least four to five hours of sun per day for decent production.	Beets, carrots, potatoes, radishes and turnips will do OK in partial shade, but you'll have to wait longer for a full crop. The more light you have, the faster they'll mature. Alternatively, you can harvest baby carrots or small new potatoes for a gourmet treat that would cost an arm and a leg at a grocery store.
Scallions	At least three hours of sun per day.	This crop does well in partial shade throughout the growing season.
Spinach	At least three to four hours of sun per day.	Spinach welcomes shade, as it bolts easily if in full sun. If you grow it specifically to harvest as baby spinach, you'll be able to harvest for quite a while as long as you continue to harvest the outmost leaves of each plant.

The estimates in this chart are based on the experiences of the author and the experts mentioned in [Best Vegetables to Grow in the Shade](#).

Comments

susiechambers

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My daughter sent me this link and I'm so happy to join in. I've been a gardener all of my life and love the garden news of growing in partially sunny areas. Thank you.

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