



Extension News Column

University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, www.uaf.edu/ces/fycit@uaf.edu, 907-474-5211, FAX 907-474-6885

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To: Mary Beth Smetzer, community news editor, News-Miner, 459-7546 (wk), 452-7917 (fax), mismetzer@newsminer.com, and people@newsminer.com
From: Roxie Dinstel
Re: **Pinching Pennies to run Mondays on page A-3**
Additional Contact: Debbie Carter, information officer, 474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

We're all concerned with reducing our food miles and eating local and in season. Nothing is more local than food that you grow in your own home and garden. January isn't a great time for gardening, but you can grow sprouts on your kitchen counter and use them in a wide variety of dishes all year around.

Sprouts are great for adding a bit of flavor or crunch to a salad or sandwich, and can really boost the nutritional value of your meal. For example, one cup of bean sprouts provides 119% of your daily Vitamin C, and broccoli sprouts are considered by nutritionists to be a "cancer fighting superfood" due to high levels of phytochemicals (mainly sulphorophanes).

Sprouts are simple to grow, and can be grown in approximately four inches of countertop space. That's a lot of nutrition at a minimum of space, effort and money.

You'll need: a wide mouth jar, like a Mason canning jar (you can reuse a jar from peanut butter or pasta sauce, too. Just wash it very well.), sprouting seeds, fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth, and a bowl with lid or plastic storage bag for storing sprouts.

Be sure to look for seeds specifically labeled as "sprouting seeds" or "for sprouting." These seeds have been cleaned well and are pathogen-free. Sometimes you can find packets of sprouting seeds in garden centers, but if not, check your favorite seed catalog; many now sell sprouting seed.

Many types of veggies can be eaten as sprouts. Most of us are familiar with alfalfa sprouts and bean sprouts, but consider radish sprouts, beet sprouts, pea sprouts, and sunflower. Any plant that you eat the stems and leaves is a good option for sprouting. Plants from which you only eat the fruits (such as tomatoes and peppers) won't work.

Soaking times and amounts of seeds for sprouting in a quart jar:

- Alfalfa seeds: Soak 2 Tablespoons for 4 to 8 hours
- Clover seeds: Soak 2 Tablespoons for 4 to 8 hours
- Broccoli seeds: Soak 2 Tablespoons for 8 to 12 hours
- Whole lentils: Soak 1 cup for 8 to 12 hours, then eat
- Fenugreek seeds: Soak 1/4 cup for 4 to 8 hours
- Radish seeds: Soak 3 Tablespoons for 4 to 8 hours
- Wheat berries: soak 1 cup whole wheat berries for 8 to 12 hours
- Rye berries: Soak 1 cup whole rye berries for 8 to 12 hours

Growing sprouts in a jar is easy. Here's how to do it:

1. Place one to two tablespoons of seeds in your jar, and cover with approximately two inches of warm water. Let this sit overnight.
2. Drain the water, using a fine sieve or cheesecloth.
3. Rinse the seeds by adding water in the jar, swishing the seeds around, and draining.
4. Repeat twice a day, every day until your sprouts are the desired size. This will take anywhere from three to seven days, depending on the variety of sprout you're growing. Sprouts are best when they're still fairly small and just starting to turn green.
5. Store your sprouts in a covered bowl or food storage bag with a paper towel inside to absorb excess moisture. Use the sprouts within a week.

Most sprouts are edible as soon as you see a tail (the root) emerging from the seed, but you can let them grow as long as you want. Alfalfa and clover will fill the jar so completely that you'll have a hard time getting them out, so don't let them go too far.

There are lots of gadgets for sprouting, but simple is best. Growing sprouts is a great way to get more nutrition in your diet.

Roxie Rodgers Dinstel is a professor of extension on the Tanana District Extension Faculty. Questions or column requests can be e-mailed to her at rrdinstel@alaska.edu or by calling 907-474-2426. The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, working in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.