

Lettuce

(Lactuca sativa)

M. Poffley* and G. Owens, Senior Extension Officer, Crops Forestry and Horticulture, Darwin

*Formerly DPIFM

SOWING

In the Top End climate lettuce plantings are restricted to the cooler months from April till July. Hot weather makes the plants to bolt, as they do not form a head but flower instead. Non-heading varieties such as Cos and the fancy lettuces are more suitable for the Top End. Direct sowing into the beds is much better than transplanting later which may delay maturity by as much as three weeks. The rows should be spaced 30-40 cm apart. Seeds must be planted very shallow and for best results a depression should be made down the planting row. The seeds are then thinly spread along the depression and covered with a loose mulch of sawdust or a light covering of soil. Later the seedlings can be thinned out to 20-25 cm between plants.



FERTILISER

For best results the seed bed must be prepared well in advance, by digging in large quantities (2 kg/m² or more) of well rotted animal manure or compost. In addition 70 g/m² of a complete fertiliser is placed down the row and worked into the soil, i.e. 17 g/m² of a row 25 cm wide. A side dressing of about 30 g/m² of a complete fertiliser every two weeks should be applied. Avoid contacting the leaves with fertiliser as it can burn them. It is advisable to water plants immediately afterwards to wash off any fertiliser.

WATERING

Sprinklers are quite suitable for this purpose. Frequent watering is essential and in exceptionally dry, windy conditions can be three times a day. Fast growth is essential. Stress on the plant causing wilting due to heat or lack of moisture often results in rough, leathery, bitter flavoured leaves. Mulching between plants with straw or lawn cuttings will help check rapid evaporation. When mulching, ensure that the mulch does not come in contact with the plant.

HARVESTING

Picking can commence as soon as the plants reach a reasonable size. Depending on variety and climate this can vary from 50-90 days.



INSECTS

Caterpillars and aphids are the main pests of lettuces.

For information on insect control, please refer to the DPIFM Entomology website at <http://pestinfo.nt.gov.au/>

Please visit us on our website at www.horticulture.nt.gov.au

Please visit us at our website:

www.nt.gov.au/dpifm

Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines

© Northern Territory Government

ISSN 0157-8243

Serial No. 195

Agdex No. 252

Disclaimer: While all care has been taken to ensure that information contained in this Agnote is true and correct at the time of publication, the Northern Territory of Australia gives no warranty or assurance, and makes no representation as to the accuracy of any information or advice contained in this publication, or that it is suitable for your intended use. No serious, business or investment decisions should be made in reliance on this information without obtaining independent/or professional advice in relation to your particular situation.