

Episode 108 show notes and advice

Episode description

For the next episode in our '12 best series' Sarah takes time to share her best-loved vegetables, fruit, and salads that will make a huge difference to any homegrown harvest. From the easiest to grow to the tastiest varieties, Sarah offers her top tips for an abundant kitchen garden.

In this episode, discover:

- ❖ Sarah's top 12 vegetables for an incredible kitchen garden
- ❖ Overlooked varieties that are super easy to grow
- ❖ Recipe ideas for every season

episode 108 advice sheet

Sarah's top 12 best-ever veg

Cut and come again varieties

Flat-leaf parsley (1:32)

- ❖ Sarah says that herbs can turn any ordinary meal into something truly delicious. Whether you're making a stunning parsley sauce to accompany ham, a buckwheat salad, a tabbouleh, or a mixed leaf salad, parsley is incredibly versatile and great for elevating dishes.
- ❖ Sarah chooses to sow her parsley seeds now (February), as winter moves into spring, and then again as autumn moves into winter. Parsley 'Giant di Napoli' is Sarah's absolute favourite. Possibly the hardiest, and no doubt the tastiest, Sarah says she prefers this specific variety to traditional English curly parsley.
- ❖ Top tip - Great for window boxes in the city, or planted out straight into the ground, Sarah says there's a germinator inhibitor which coats the seeds, which means germination is slow. Soak the seeds in a saucer overnight, and in the morning strain with a sieve over a paper towel and dry out. This will really speed up germination.

Lettuce 'Merveille de Quatre Saisons' (3:30)

- ❖ Another firm favourite of Sarah's, which she says she could live without. Green, crinkly, and slightly waxy, it's a wash of crimson over the vivid green leaves. Deeper and richer in flavour as it gets cold, this variety can be sown and grown all year round.
- ❖ It's cut and come again too, so keep the heart intact, and it will keep going for months on end. It's an absolute winner!

Mizuna 'Red Knight' F1 (5:32)

- ❖ Sarah's favourite mizuna, and the most substantial of the varieties. Unlike the green mizuna which looks a lot like soft feathers, the crimson variety is robust and packs a real punch.
- ❖ Unlike other mizunas, this variety has at least three times as much substance to each leaf, it works really well with a butterhead lettuce in a salad for maximum flavour.
- ❖ Lovely as a base in a stir fry, remove from the pan as just cooked, as it wilts quickly. Slightly like a brassica, it's also peppery with a hint of mustard, which gives a great flavour with half a red onion and a can of coconut milk too.

Salad Rocket 'Serrata' (6:48)

- ❖ Best in the shoulders of the year, avoiding the hot and dry summer. It's really more substantial in the later months of the year, but as it grows colder, the flavour will intensify in heat.
- ❖ Sow in February, March, and April, for a quick harvest. This peppery edible makes even the most boring salad come alive with flavour.

Swiss Chard 'White Silver 2' (7:43)

- ❖ The big, white-stemmed chard, is also loved by Sarah. Truly cut and come again in nature, almost like two vegetables in one, remove the stem from the green and cook each element separately.
- ❖ The green is almost like spinach or kale. Whereas the white stem is almost like spinach crossed with celery, with a faint flavour of cardoon. The stem takes slightly longer to cook than the leaves, so place in a pot of boiling water, and blanch.
- ❖ The stem makes a delicious gratin with some parmesan and a white bechamel sauce. You can read the recipe for chard gratin, here:
<https://www.sarahraven.com/articles/chard-gratin>. Alternatively, try preparing the

chard stems as you would French-style leeks, in a mustardy vinaigrette. This green also works wonderfully with bechamel and a lot of nutmeg for a tasty pasta sauce.

Rhubarb (10:24)

- ❖ A much-underestimated vegetable, it's cut and come again which means abundant rhubarb for months at a time. Tugging on the rhubarb also promotes more buds underground and strong root formation, essential to a healthy plant.
- ❖ Heavily mulch as rhubarb is a very hungry feeder. It also grows in shade and is incredibly tolerant. Early varieties like Rhubarb 'Timperley Early' will be ready to harvest from February/March, and later varieties such as Rhubarb 'Victoria' can be picked from March until the end of July. Great for puddings and rhubarb cordial too.
- ❖ To view the Perch Hill rhubarb cordial recipe, visit the link here:
<https://www.sarahraven.com/articles/perch-hill-rhubarb-cordial>

Kale 'Redbor' F1 (11:45)

- ❖ Kale 'Redbore' is like the dowager duchess or queen of the vegetable garden - elegant, with impressive stature, it really dominates the space, plus, it's absolutely delicious too. The only draw back is that this variety does take quite some time to grow, so isn't suitable for those who might be looking for quick growing vegetables.
- ❖ If you're looking to plant from seed, Kale 'Red Russian' is a great alternative, and much faster growing. Ready to harvest in around just 6 weeks, you can pick from this variety practically every day.

Great for greenhouses

Potatoes (13:07)

- ❖ There's something so satisfying about planting potatoes in furrows, getting your trowel, and digging out enough potatoes for dinner. The more people you have to feed, the more of the plant you can dig up.
- ❖ Potato 'Anya' is simply delicious. If you get them into water with mint and salt, they are inexplicably different to shop bought varieties, with a supreme taste. Potato 'International kidney' is another of Sarah's absolute favourites, as is 'Pink Fir Apple' with its natural sweetness, although this potato is more readily available from farmer's markets than it used to be.

Tomatoes (15:20)

- ❖ From the middle of July to the end of September, and sometimes even later in the year than that, Tomato 'Sungold' and Tomato 'Noire de Crimée' are absolute superstars.
- ❖ The latter, from Crimea, is big, often black and crimson, juicy, slightly acidic, and has an amazing texture, which is great for salads, particularly with mozzarella. This variety also makes a wonderful gazpacho, particularly raw.
- ❖ Tomato 'Sungold' has tremendous flavour and a thin skin, which makes it particularly good for cutting. It's also very sweet and massively prolific too. A frequent award winner.

Cucumber 'La Diva' (18:02)

- ❖ About the size of a Havana cigar, Sarah chooses to harvest these varieties when they reach the size of her wrist and stretch to her forefinger. They won't get seedy or bitter and are really juicy without being too wet. The more you harvest, the more productive they become. Grow them on a frame as they are technically climbers.
- ❖ Top tip - Sarah says be careful with how many cucumber plants you choose to plant and grow. As these are so prolific, you can end up with a huge yield.