

5 Powerhouse Foods to Grow this Year



What is a Powerhouse Food?

A powerhouse food is a nutrient-dense food that provides 10% or more of at least 1 or more essential nutrient in a single serving. Essential nutrients include calcium, fiber, potassium, and vitamins. Powerhouse foods reduce the risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes.

Dark Leafy Greens: Spinach, Leaf Lettuce, Swiss Chard



Nutritional Value: Vitamin A (promotes vision and skin health), Vitamin C (supports collagen production), Vitamin K, Fiber (supports digestion), Calcium (promotes bone health, muscle and nerve function), Iron (supports blood nutrients), Potassium (supports nerve function).

How to Grow: Dark leafy greens are a cool weather crop that can be planted in the spring and fall. The seeds can be planted directly into moist soil. They can be harvested multiple times.

Tips for Cooking: Greens can be added to any meal to increase the nutritional value. Add them to pasta, scrambled eggs, and smoothies. They are also great sautéed with a little oil and seasoning.

Broccoli and Broccolini



Nutritional Value: Vitamin C (supports collagen production), and Calcium (promotes bone health, muscle and nerve function)

How to Grow: Broccoli grows best in cool weather. Start planting seedlings in the early spring or late summer. It will thrive in soil that is kept rich and moist. When harvesting, cut the stem at an angle several inches below the head.

Tips for Cooking: Broccoli can be added to soups and pastas to increase nutritional value! It's also delicious on its own or dipped in hummus.

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Beets and Beet Greens



Nutritional Value

Beets: Vitamin C and Folate (a valuable nutrient during pregnancy)

Beet Greens: Vitamin C and Vitamin A

How to Grow:

Beets are super easy to grow! In midsummer, plant groups of 2-4 seeds directly into the soil. Make sure they receive direct sunlight and keep the soil moist. The beets will be ready to harvest in 6-8 weeks.

Tips for Cooking:

Beets: Beets have an earthy taste. They can be eaten raw or cooked and make a great addition to a salad or sandwich.

Beet Greens: Beet greens are sweet and have a mild flavor. They can be added to salads when young or sautéed with oil and seasoning.

Red Peppers



Nutritional Value: Vitamin A and Vitamin C

How to Grow: The easiest way to start growing peppers is to begin with a small plant. If starting from seed, the seed should grow in warm and moist soil. As the plant matures, the soil should be well-drained with little compost. To harvest, remove each individual pepper from its stalk.

Tips for Cooking: This sweet and crunchy vegetable is great adding to sandwiches, wraps, and salads.

How to prepare beet greens

Beet greens are often discarded, but they are considered one of the top powerhouse foods in this growing region! After purchasing or harvesting, be sure to separate the greens from the beet to allow storage life go further! A quick and easy way to prepare beet greens: Sauteed! Cover a pan in oil and place on stove on medium heat. When the pan is heated add 1 bunch of beet greens, 1 clove of garlic, Cook for 5-7 minutes until the greens are tender and wilted. Add in 1 tablespoon of lemon juice and red pepper flakes, salt and pepper (to taste). Enjoy!

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Herbs: Chives and Parsley



Nutritional Value:

Parsley: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Potassium, Calcium, Folate

Chives: Calcium, Potassium, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K

How to Grow:

Chives: Chives are low maintenance and only require moist soil and sun. To plant, place a clump of chives into the ground. Trim regularly to maximize your harvest. It can grow outside in the summer and it will overwinter in this climate. Chives will return year after year!

Parsley: The easiest way to grow is to buy small plants. It thrives in cool soil and can grow summer into fall. Prune parsley regularly to prevent it from going to seed.

Tips for Cooking:

Parsley: This peppery and slightly bitter plant is great on top of pastas, vegetables, and soups. For a quick nutrient boost to your morning,, add parsley to your smoothie or eggs.

Chives: Chives have a the flavor of a mild onion. It's a great addition to potatoes, soups, and salads. It's easy, chop and sprinkle on top!

Other Powerhouse foods to consider growing in your region

The study by the National Institute of Health listed many fruits and vegetables that are considered powerhouse foods. Others include carrots, tomatoes, citrus fruits, brussels sprouts, berries, and sweet potatoes. Fore more information and to learn more, please visit references below.

References

- <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/food-technology/nutrition/>
- https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2014/13_0390.htm
- <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/home/food-and-health/nutrition/>
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