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Used for salad mixes, as garnishes, or for eating fresh on their own, shoots are the first part of a plant that appear above the soil as it develops from a seed. Shoots can be a versatile, healthy, and profitable addition to your operation.

A variety of plants can be used for producing edible shoots—Johnny's offers the most reliable. The various flavors that shoots present make them popular in restaurants, farmers' markets, and specialty grocery stores. Producing shoots offers growers another option to extend their season. They can be grown indoors year-round or in a greenhouse.

Shoots are easy to grow in flats in a greenhouse, indoors under grow lights, or outside when the weather is warm enough (65°F/18.3°C). The following instructions will help alleviate variability within a single crop.

Crop	Harvest Size	Flavor
Buckwheat	3–4"	Mild, lettuce-like flavor
Cucumber	3" — before true leaves develop	Mild cucumber flavor
Melon	2" — before true leaves develop	Sweet, melon flavor
Nasturtium	Leaves are 1" diameter	Spicy flavor
Popcorn	3–4"	Sweet flavor
Peas	3–5"	Mild, pea flavor
Sunflowers*	3–4"	Mild, nutty flavor
Wheat**	3–5"	Fresh, pleasantly bitter; mild sweet flavor as juice

* For sunflower shoots, please note that there can be slight variability lot to lot. We evaluate black oil seed types and select the best of these lots based on uniform emergence, shoot appearance, seed coat shedding, and color.

** While wheat shoots are not recommended for fresh eating due to their high fiber content, they are very popular for juicing.

Growing Instructions

1. Soak desired amount of seeds for 8–24 hours before sowing.
2. Sow seeds into open flats filled with 1–1½" potting soil. Seeding density should be high enough so that there is approximately ¼" spacing around each seed.
3. To ensure that the seed maintains even moisture, cover the seed with either potting soil or a "nested" flat, gently pressed down. Leave the nested flat in place for 2–3 days or until germination occurs and the nested flat lifts up.
4. Regularly mist or spray lightly to maintain moisture level, which is most important at this stage.
5. If mold becomes problematic from warmer temperatures:
 - Water from the bottom if possible to keep the soil dry on top. Placing a leak-proof tray under your seed tray will enable bottom watering. Be sure to drain trays regularly of excess water.
 - The use of circulation fans may reduce the incidence of mold by improving the overall air flow.

6. As seedlings are growing, gently run a plant stake or your hand over the plants; this helps to knock seed coats from cotyledons.
7. If some seed coats do not fall off readily, gently brush the shoots to remove them. Alternately, shoots can be harvested and placed in a water bath; the seed coats will float to the surface when the shoots are pushed below.
8. Grow in an area without light if you prefer blanched shoots, which are more tender and will give a longer harvest window. Corn and pea shoots are the most commonly blanched shoots.
9. Harvest the shoots when they reach the desired size (see chart below) or what your market prefers. This should take 7–21 days, depending upon light, temperature, and the specific crop.
10. Cut shoots with a sharp knife or scissors just above the soil line. Transfer to a plastic bag or sealed container and refrigerate.

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