

# CAN YOU DIG IT!



## Plant Spacing & Thinning

Giving your plants enough room to grow is one of the most important steps to a great harvest! Plants get water and nutrients from their roots. Even though above the ground two plants might look like they are not crowded, many plants spread their roots far beyond just the width of their leaves!

### Basic Tips

For many plants you can seed them very close together, then thin them out as they grow bigger, until they are at their recommended spacing as a mature plant. For plants like kale, arugula, lettuce and swiss chard you can eat your thinnings as baby greens!

If you have shallow soil (8 inches or so of healthy, rich soil), you will need to select varieties that do well in containers, or you will need to give your plants more space than recommended for them to grow properly. If you garden in deep raised beds, you can keep your plants a little closer to each other.

### Some typical plant spacings

The best way to know how much space each mature plant will need is to read the back of the package, or look the variety up in a seed catalogue. For example:

Plants that need a lot of space (18"–24" between individual plants, 3 feet between rows)

- Tomato, Broccoli, Cabbage, Brussel Sprouts

Plants that need a moderate amount of space (12"–18" between individual plants, 2 feet between rows)

- Kale, Swiss Chard, Lettuce

Plants that need a small amount of space (3"–4" between plants, 12" between rows)

- Peas, Carrots, Beets

### When to thin?

For most plants, the best time to thin is once the plants have at least 1 set of true leaves. You may want to thin several times before reaching the final plant spacing.

### Seed Leaves and True Leaves

When a seed sprouts, the first leaves you see are called seed leaves and they look very different from the plants actual leaves. Wait until the next set of leaves, called "true leaves" sprout before thinning. True leaves tell you that the plant has begun growing some roots, and now is the time to do your first thinning!



*Kale: seed leaves and first true leaves*



*Carrots: seed leaves and first true leaves*