



Best Lettuce Varieties

Composited by Gareth Richards

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Best Lettuce Varieties for UK Gardens

Find the best lettuce varieties for UK gardens, summer heat, pots and winter harvests, based on current Which? and RHS growing trials.



Little Gem is the best lettuce for small UK gardens and containers, while Lobjoits Green delivers the strongest full-sized cos flavour. Thimble is the safer choice for summer heat, Salad Bowl suits repeated leaf picking, and Winter Density covers cold-season harvests. Which? grew and tasted 49 varieties, assessing flavour, crispness, yield and vigour across crunchy, cos and autumn-sown groups.

Key takeaways

Little Gem is the best compact lettuce for pots, raised beds and small households

Lobjoits Green scored five stars for crispness and flavour in the public Which? trial table

Thimble handles summer heat better than many cos varieties but still benefits from afternoon shade

Salad Bowl gives repeated outer-leaf harvests without waiting for a full heart

Winter Density is the dependable cold-season cos for August and early September sowing

Sow small batches every three weeks because freshness matters more than one large harvest

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Variety	Type	Best sowing window	Typical spacing	Best use	Main weakness
Little Gem	Mini cos	February - July	15-20cm	Pots and small hearts	Heads are small
Lobjoits Green	Large cos	February - June	30cm	Flavour and crunch	Needs more bed space
Thimble	Compact cos	March - July	20cm	Warmer slots	Still bolts in prolonged heat
Salad Bowl	Loose leaf	March -August	15-20cm	Repeat -ed leaf picking	No firm heart
Winter Density	Winter cos	August -early September	20cm	Autumn and winter	winter in deep snow
Holly-wood	Crisp -head	March-June	30cm	Dense Iceberg -style head	Needs even watering

Which? weighted its crunchy-lettuce score towards taste and texture. Crispness and flavour supplied 35% of the rating, while yield supplied 25%. That weighting suits home gardeners because a huge bland head is no bargain.



Mixing lettuce types gives different textures and reduces the risk of every plant bolting together.

What is the best lettuce for most UK gardens?

Little Gem is the most useful single variety for small plots, pots and ordinary kitchens. Each plant makes a compact, sweet cos heart.

The plants need only 15-20cm between centres. Four fit comfortably in a 30cm trough, while six fill a 40cm square container. Their small size means fewer half-used heads in the fridge.

Sow one seed per module from mid-February under cover. Harden plants off and set them outside once the roots hold the compost together. A second sowing every three weeks keeps the harvest moving.

Little Gem appears in the current Which? crunchy and cos trial tables. It also holds an RHS Award of Garden Merit. That overlap makes it a sound default packet.

For the full sowing method, see our guide to growing lettuce and salad leaves.

Which cos lettuce has the best flavour?

Lobjoits Green is the full-sized cos to grow when flavour and crunch matter most. It has thick ribs and a dense upright heart.

The public Which? results give Lobjoits Green five stars for crispness and flavour. Its trimmed head averaged 309g and received four stars overall. Germination also scored four stars.

That flavour comes with a space cost. Give plants 30cm each way and do not crowd them beside vigorous crops. Tight spacing traps humidity and encourages downy mildew.

Sow in spring for heads before the hottest weather. Water the soil, not the foliage, early in the day. Cut the whole plant when the heart feels firm.

Our lettuce downy mildew guide explains the pale leaf patches and white growth that appear in cool, humid conditions.



Full-sized cos needs 30cm spacing. Give it airflow and harvest once the heart feels firm.

Which lettuce is least likely to bolt in summer?

Thimble is a better summer cos choice, although no lettuce is completely bolt-proof. Heat changes leaf flavour before a flower spike becomes visible.

Which? recorded widespread early bolting during a hot trial. Its guidance notes problems once temperatures rise above 25C and specifically suggests Thimble for warmer conditions.

Sow summer lettuce where it receives morning sun and afternoon shade. Keep the root zone evenly moist with a 2cm compost mulch around established plants. Water early, before the day heats up.

Start seeds indoors in a cool room during hot spells. Lettuce germination falls sharply in warm compost, so a shaded tray often performs better than a greenhouse bench.

Once a plant tastes bitter, pull it. Extra watering cannot reverse bolting. Replace it with a fresh sowing or another vegetable that tolerates shade.



Afternoon shade and steady moisture delay bolting. They cannot rescue a plant once its flavour turns bitter.

Harvest outer leaves during mild spells, leaving the centre intact. Growth almost stops during the darkest weeks, then restarts as days lengthen.

Winter Density works well beside corn salad and hardy oriental leaves. Our winter salad guide sets out a mixed sowing plan. For another frost-hardy leaf, try growing corn salad.



August-sown winter lettuce can crop outdoors under mesh, with slower growth during December and January

A six-plant succession that avoids lettuce gluts

Six plants every three weeks supply a steadier harvest than one full seed packet. The calculation is simple and fits a small bed.

Six Little Gem plants occupy roughly 0.25 square metres at 20cm spacing. Sow six modules plus two spares. Repeat after three weeks, then compost the weaker spare plants.

Run four batches from March to June. That produces 24 compact hearts across roughly 12 weeks. Switch the July batch to Thimble in afternoon shade. Sow Winter Density in August.

This schedule is Garden UK's own plot calculation. It turns a packet into timed household portions without claiming a fixed yield. Weather, slugs and appetite will change the final count.

If slugs repeatedly remove transplants, raise the next batch in modules until each plant has four true leaves.

Frequently asked questions

What is the best lettuce variety to grow in the UK?

Little Gem is the best all-round lettuce for most UK gardens. Its compact sweet hearts mature quickly and fit containers. Grow Lobjoits Green when you want a larger, crisper cos.

Which lettuce is best for summer heat?

Thimble is a useful heat-tolerant cos for summer sowing. Give it afternoon shade and steady moisture once temperatures exceed 25C. No lettuce remains bolt-proof during prolonged heat.

Which lettuce grows best in pots?

Little Gem grows particularly well in containers. Space plants 15-20cm apart in a pot at least 20cm deep. Keep compost moist and harvest each compact heart whole.

What is the best cut-and-come-again lettuce?

Salad Bowl is the most dependable cut-and-come-again lettuce. Pick the largest outer leaves and leave the centre growing. A sowing can crop for several weeks.

Which lettuce can I grow over winter?

Winter Density is the best winter cos for UK gardens. Sow in August or early September, then protect plants with mesh or fleece. Pick outer leaves during mild weather.

How to Contact the Editor

If you have comments or you know I have given wrong advice then please contact me by email at

info@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

If you have something to contribute or have a say on allotment life, then please use my email to send your contributions.

I am going to process the magazine issue once a month, so if there are comments you would like to make they can be answered in future editions.

I would like to add that most of the articles are taken off the web and some well known gardening and allotments magazines have been read in the making of our magazine content.

We also have our own website at :

www.yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

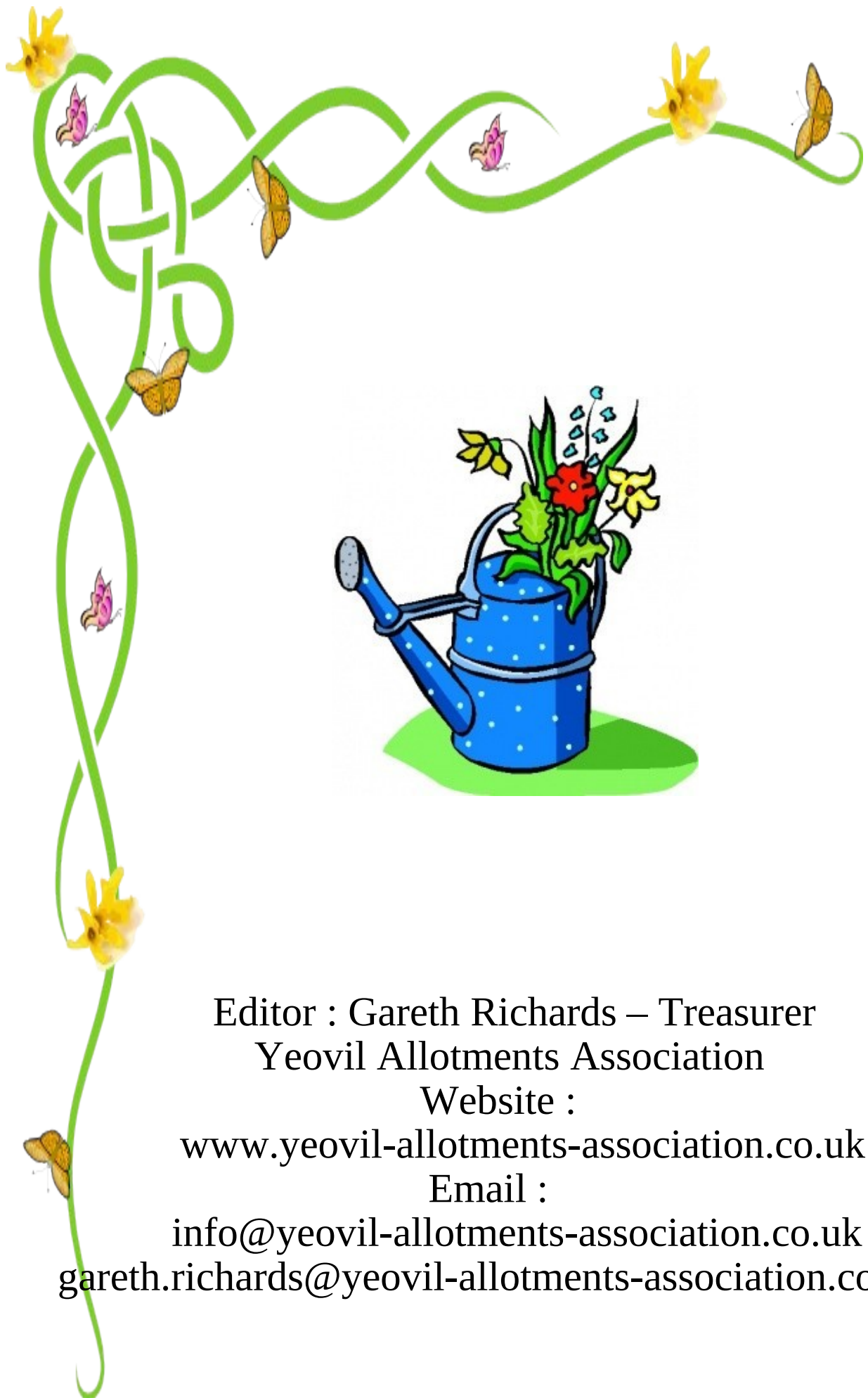
where you can find this magazine as well as a catalogue

Happy Allotmenting and best wishes,

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