LOLLA ROSA

Lolla Rosa is a deeply curled loose leaf lettuce variety with heavily frilled green leaves that have magenta-red edges. Yuma County spring mix producers plant baby greens at seeding rates of up to 3 million seeds per acre, producing a crop within ~30 days. There are approximately 10,000 acres of baby leaf greens produced in the Yuma area.

Lolla Rosa is an incredibly hardy little looseleaf lettuce variety and is comprised of densely ruffled, curled maroon-red leaves and its wild frilliness and dramatic, deep color make it a popular choice for baby greens. The incredibly dense frilly leaves are green with deep, deep red edges. The stiff frills help to separate other leaves in salads as well as adding a lovely red color.

Lettuce is a great vegetable, but it doesn’t have to be relegated to rows in a vegetable field or garden. Some view this versatile plant as an ornamental addition to the landscape which adding color and texture. It looks handsome mixed with annuals in a flower bed, combines well with spring-flowering bulbs, or is a great foliar foil in mixed containers. Lettuces with frilly, ornately shaped or beautifully colored leaves can be grown strictly as ornamentals, with no intention of harvesting them to eat. They can be used as a landscape border, as an edging or placed in among other plants. When mixing lettuce with other ornamental plants, the same principles of design are used as with other foliage plants. Select plants to contrast in color and texture with the adjacent plants regardless whether they are other lettuce varieties or herbaceous ornamentals.

There are innumerable varieties of lettuce in a huge range of colors, leaf shapes and sizes for almost any look. Not all lettuce is the pale green of typical grocery store iceberg lettuce. All shades of green from pale to very dark. There are also burgundy or red leaved types (like Lola Rossa), and numerous types mottled or variegated in shades of green and red. Leaf shape varies with choices of smooth edged or deeply indented, such as oak leaf types, and flat or frilly.

Lolla Rosa is typically used as an addition to spring mix salads which is made up of several carefully selected baby lettuces and greens that are picked, washed and packaged as whole leaves.

All baby leaf, spinach and other small leaf baby green varieties in Yuma are harvested mechanically. Built completely in stainless steel for food safety and longevity, mechanical harvesting has reduced harvesting cost from .28 cents per pound to less than .01 cent per pound, with a capability of cutting over 15,000 Lbs. per hour. A mechanical harvester can cut Lolla Rosa harvesting speeds from 0 mph to over 3 mph you can imagine how well you will gain control of your harvesting cost. You will reduce labor while increasing quality and production output.

Whether you choose baby field greens for your salad or dive right in to mustard greens, ounce for ounce, these celebrated greens pack a powerful nutritious punch, providing a wide array of nutrients including fiber, beta-carotene, calcium, iron, folic acid and chlorophyll (the green pigment found in plant cells). Many varieties of leafy greens, including Lolla Rosa, are rich sources of Vitamin C. Dark green leafy vegetables are good sources of many vitamins and minerals your body needs to stay healthy, like vitamin A, vitamin C, and calcium. They are also great sources of fiber. The darker the leaves, the more nutrients the vegetable usually has.

Lolla Rosa lettuce is believed to be a selected form of the bitter-leaved wild species (*Lactuca serriola*) found throughout Europe, Asia, and North Africa. The ancient Egyptians were said to have been the first to cultivate it. The Egyptians believed it was an aphrodisiac. They also used
its white sap and leaves in a concoction along with fresh beef, frankincense, and juniper berries as a "remedy" for stomach aches.

The wild lettuces were harsh and not normally eaten as they contained relatively large amounts of latex which produced a mildly sleep-inducing effect. In fact, the Roman name for lettuce is *lactuca*, indicating its milky sap or latex which was associated with milk, lac, but smelled like the latex of opium poppies, although they are not related. During this time, lettuce was eaten at the end of the evening meal so as to induce sleep. Later, it was eaten at the beginning to stimulate the appetite. By 1600, these effects had been greatly reduced through breeding, an amazing tribute to the power of plant breeding which is still used today.

Looseleaf lettuces, such as Lolla Rosa, are sometimes called "cutting", "bunching", or "curled" lettuces (var. *crispa*) because they do not form a head, but rather a loose bunch of leaves. There are many different variations in color and shape. Leaves may be round or elongated, indented or with unbroken margins, and the plant ranges from low and bushy to upright. The fully grown leaves are either cut or picked individually, making a number of harvests possible. In commercial harvesting, the whole bunch is cut rather than individual leaves. This type is a favorite of home gardeners as it can be picked all season long. Once a leaf is picked at the stem, a new one will grow back to replace it.

The Italian variety *Lollo Rosso*, and its green leaf sister, *Lollo Biondo*, taste pleasantly strong and nutty although slightly bitter. This type of lettuce actually belongs to the cutting or looseleaf variety, but their tightly crimped tender leaves form such a compact hemispherical rosette that they give the impression of a head.

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