

# Cress (Upland)

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*Barbarea verna* (Cruciferae)

## Fast Facts:

Acres in Washington: less than 5 acres Number of Growers: 1
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## Description of crop:

There are many names for upland and other kinds of cresses causing confusion in identification. Cress is a blanket name for a number of related peppery greens in the mustard family. Upland cress should not be confused with watercress or pepper grass. In some parts of the U.S, upland cress grows as a weed. When grown as a crop, upland cress is used in herb mixes and salads. It can be eaten as a cooked green like spinach or kale or eaten raw. As a general rule all parts of a cress plant is edible. The leaves have a spicy, peppery taste similar to watercress only more pungent.

Upland cress is a hardy biennial that grows on dry land. Depending on its environmental conditions, the upland cress flowering stalks grow from 6 to 12 inches tall. It has shiny, smooth leaves that are notched and a 6-8 inch leaf stem. Upland cress resembles dandelions in that each first produces a rosette and the plant then sends up a flowering stem. It has branching taproots and a yellow flower. Upland cress is a cool-season plant that bolts quickly in hot weather. It is grown in the spring and fall and can withstand mild freezes. Succession plantings are needed to ensure a continuous supply of young leaves throughout the season. Leaves are picked when the plant is 4 inches tall with repeated pickings. Use scissors to harvest cress sprouts when the young leaves turn green. It is best to harvest young cress before the plant flowers otherwise the leaves become tough and acid.

In Washington, cress is grown for local markets. Only one company in the state sells upland cress seed, most of which is sold into Canada. Harvested cress can be stored under refrigeration for more than 7 days.

## Key pests:

In eastern Washington, cress production is half organic and half conventional. The main insect pest is the flea beetle. Weeds pests include, lambsquarter, pigweeds, Russian thistle and common groundsel. In western Washington, cress is not grown commercially but in small gardens slugs have been a problem. Cresses are usually disease free.

## Key pesticides:

Flea beetles are controlled with azadirachtin. Weeds are controlled with hand hoeing. Slugs can be controlled with baited slug traps.

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**Expert contacts:** Alan Schreiber  
2621 Ringold Rd  
Eltopia, WA 99330  
509 266 4348

**Location  
of production:** Franklin county





# Cress Production in Washington State

Cress

