

HOME GARDEN UPLAND CRESS

Douglas C. Sanders, Extension Horticultural Specialist

**Soils**— Fertile, well-drained sandy loam or clay loam soils are satisfactory for the production of upland cress. Maintain organic matter of the soil by turning under cover crops. Use level or nearly level land to avoid erosion.

**Varieties** — There are many names for upland and other kinds of cresses, which can cause confusion in identification. Upland cress should not be confused with water cress or with pepper grass (*Lepidium nativum*) which is also called garden cress or land cress. In parts of North Carolina where upland cress and a similar variety grows as weeds, they are sometimes called creasy salad, creasy greens or highland creasy. Because of the confusion in the names of cresses, when ordering upland cress, the grower should include the scientific name, which is *Barbarea verna*. Example: upland cress (*Barbarea verna*).

**Fertilizing** — On sands and sandy loams, broadcast and work into the soil before planting 3 lb of 10-10-10 per 100 ft<sup>2</sup>. If the plants lose the deep green color, tending toward a yellowish-green, a sidedressing of 6 oz of 10-10-10 per 100 ft of row may be beneficial. The sidedressing should be made when the plants are dry to avoid burning.

**Lime Requirements** — pH 5.8 to 6.5. Have your soil tested to determine the amount of lime to apply.

**Planting Time** — The upland cress crops are sown about the middle of August when the

soil is moist. These crops are usually harvested from January to March.

**Spacing** — Drill the seed in rows 12 to 14 inches apart. A spacing of from 3 to 6 inches apart in the row is desirable. Precision seeding with a Gasparido, Stan Hay or Nibex seeder will reduce the seed used and the need to thin.

**Method** — The land should be plowed far enough ahead so that it may be harrowed several times before planting. It is essential that the seed bed be smooth and firm. Some growers use a pulverizer after planting, but this practice may do more harm than good on soils of different texture and condition. Drill in rows 0.1 oz seed per 100-ft row. The seed should be planted 1/2 inch deep in soil of average texture. The depth of planting should be a little greater in light sandy soils and a little less in heavy clay loams.

**Weed Control\*** — Shallow cultivation between rows will control weeds until cold weather retards their growth. This cultivation is not difficult if suitable cultivating equipment is available.

**Insects and Diseases\*** — There is usually very little trouble from diseases of upland cress planted in the late summer or early fall. Insects have caused little damage in the past, but root aphids now appear to be a threat to the crop. These aphids cause stunting and a considerable reduction in yield. The problem

Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Employment and program opportunities are offered to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

is so new that the frequency of attack by root aphids and their control have not yet been determined.

**Harvesting**—Upland cress is nearly always eaten as a cooked green like spinach or kale; however, in some areas, it is frequently eaten raw as a salad or garnish. Cut the entire plant when the size and market conditions will

give maximum profits. Remove yellow or damaged leaves. Wash and pack in baskets. Place a chunk of ice in the basket or cool to increase shelf-life.

\* Consult the current *N. C. Agricultural Chemicals Manual* or your county Extension agent for latest recommendations.