Salads are supposed to be light, bright, and full of life—but too often, they hit the table flat, limp, and soggy, with all the good stuff sunk at the bottom of the bowl. There are a number of reasons this happens, and now that spring is here we want everyone to enjoy the crunchiest, most satisfying salads ever. So here are some of the most common mistakes people make when tossing up a salad.

1. Go with What You Know
There's a whole world of greens outside of arugula, mesclun, kale, and romaine. Browse your farmers' market or grocery aisle to find seasonal leafy greens for your salad base, like mâche, dandelion greens, microgreens, baby kale, chicory, and escarole. You'll be amazed how much flavor and texture they'll add.

2. Just Wash 'n' Toss
A soggy salad is a sad sight—so dry those greens! Use a salad spinner—one of the few single-purpose kitchen items that are absolutely worth it—but if you don't have one, try this trick: Line a plastic shopping bag with paper towels, throw in your greens, and knot the bag. Then take the bag by the handle and give it a couple good, hard spins in the air. Your greens should come out (mostly) dry.

3. All Greens Need Is Dressing
Nope! Once they're in the bowl, you need to give your greens some undergarments before they get dressed. After you've dried them, season your naked greens with salt and pepper. Think of it as another opportunity for flavor—then you won't have to over-season your dressing to compensate. Speaking of seasoning your dressing: Mustard, lemon juice, and olive oil alone do not a dressing make. Like every layer of your salad, it's important to season your dressing to taste.

4. Any Dressing Will Work
There's a lot to consider when it comes to dressing your greens. First, and most important, you need to ask yourself: Did I match my greens to my dressing? Delicate arugula won't hold up to bold, creamy Caesar dressing. Kale overpowers a light balsamic vinaigrette. Like wines, match the bold with the bold, and the light with the light. Second, try to strike the perfect balance of dressing and salad. Overdressing your salad makes it a soggy mess, while underdressing will leave something to be desired. Add dressing little by little—tasting as you go—to make sure you get the perfect amount.

5. Where Are Those Salad Tongs?
The best tool you can use for mixing salad is: Your clean hands. Bear with us, here: A salad should be light and airy—even if it's made with hearty greens and a creamy dressing—and handled with a gentle touch. Using your hands to toss allows air to get into your mix and incorporates your ingredients in a more distributed way. Here's our preferred way: Drizzle your dressing along the walls of your bowl, then lightly toss your greens until the dressing is evenly distributed. No bruised or crushed leaves this way!

6. Toss It All Together!
Sometimes, it's best to leave some ingredients out until the last minute. We like adding in some of the heavy ingredients for the toss—like nuts, seeds, tomatoes, peas, and other bulky add-ins that sink to the bottom—then topping the salad with the rest post-toss. Your guests will get to see everything that's in the salad, and it's easier to get a little bit of everything when there's stuff on top. Also, toss your greens in dressing before adding herbs: their delicate flavor will shine through much more when they're on the outermost layer.

Source: BonAppetit.com
Spring is finally here and gardeners are gearing up for a new growing season. If you have never been involved with gardening, I would like to encourage you to start. There are several good reasons to get involved with gardening and three are right at my fingertips: it has therapeutic, economic and nutritional value.

The following information is from the article, “Why gardening is good for your health”.

In addition to being a source of fresh, healthy produce, gardening can also ease stress, keep you limber, and even improve your mood.

Here are just a few of the ways gardening can benefit your physical and mental health, and how you can start harvesting those benefits for you and your family.

**Exercise**
Gardening gets you out in the fresh air and sunshine -- and it also gets your blood moving.

Digging, planting, weeding, and other repetitive tasks that require strength or stretching are excellent forms of low-impact exercise, especially for people who find more vigorous exercise a challenge, such as those who are older, have disabilities, or suffer from chronic pain.

As a pleasurable and goal-oriented outdoor activity, gardening has another advantage over other forms of exercise: People are more likely to stick with it and do it often.

**Economic**
The economic benefits of gardening are many. A house with a neat lawn will rent or sell quicker and a home with a garden will rent or sell for more. Gardens offer curbside appeal which boosts the value of your property.

Gardens can also provide other financial benefits. Growing fruit, herbs and vegetables can save money on your grocery bills.

**Nutrition**
The food you grow yourself is the freshest food you can eat. And because home gardens are filled with fruits and vegetables, it's also among the healthiest food you can eat.

Not surprisingly, gardeners are also more likely to eat a wider range of fruit, vegetables, salads and herbs than non-gardeners with resulting health benefits.

Not to mention that homegrown produce simply tastes better.

**How to get started**

You don't need a big backyard or a green thumb to benefit from gardening. If you have very little space or experience, you can start out with just a few houseplants, or you could even try gardening in containers.

For novices who want to learn the basics of gardening, a variety of information is available online and in bookstores. But one of the best ways to get started is to meet some other gardeners, in local garden clubs, community gardens and farmer’s markets in just about any town or city.

For some great gardening tips, just start up a conversation with one of the gardeners next time you are passing by a community garden or shopping at a farmer's market.

Source: Health.com