

# Space-grown lettuce to give astronauts a more varied diet

By Hannah Devlin, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.13.20

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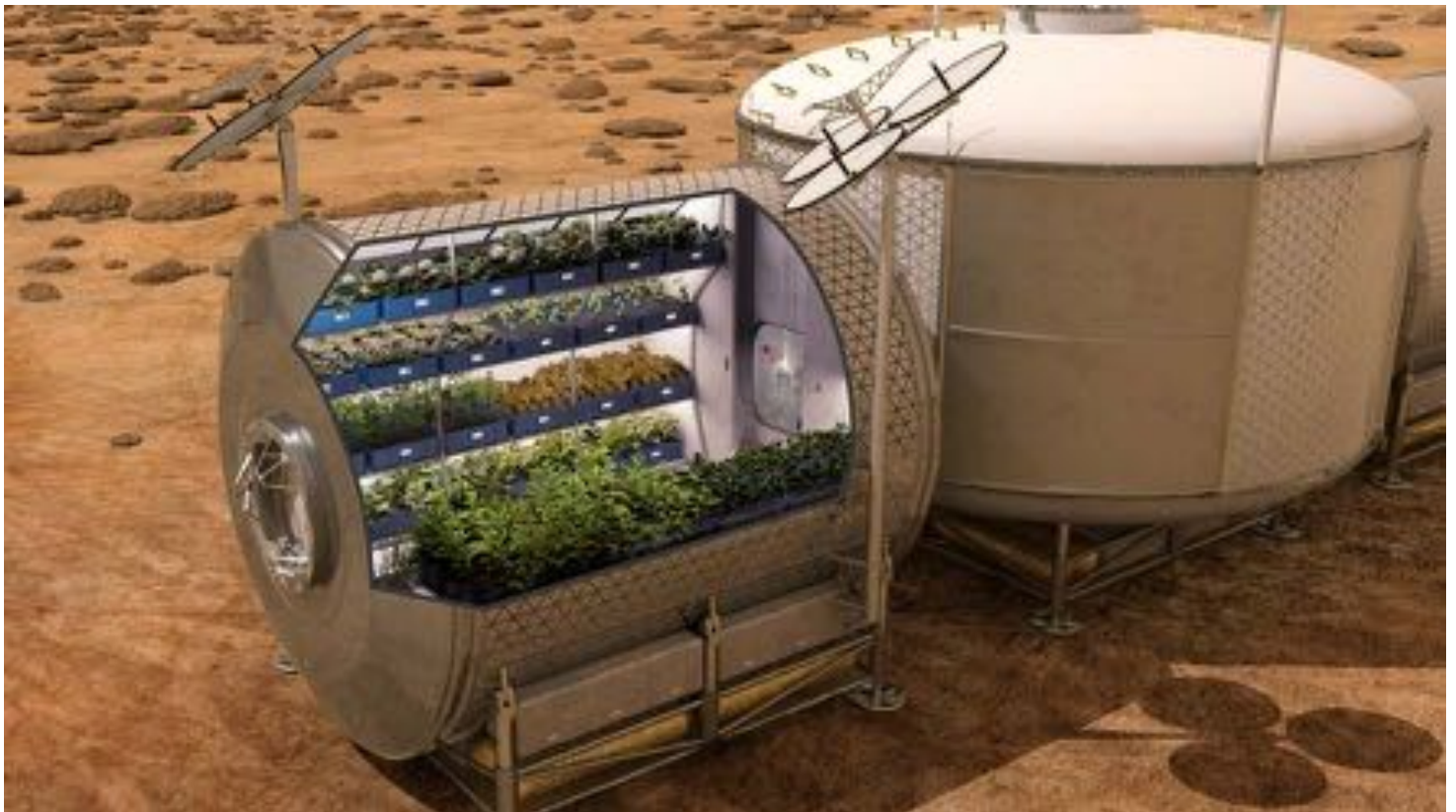


Image 1. NASA's Veggie system for growing fresh food on future spacecraft and on other planets. Photo by: NASA

Astronauts do many interesting things. They become weightless in space. They shoot into space faster than an airplane.

Still, astronaut food is not so interesting. Astronauts eat strange foods. One example is dried ice cream. Astronauts also use liquid salt and pepper.

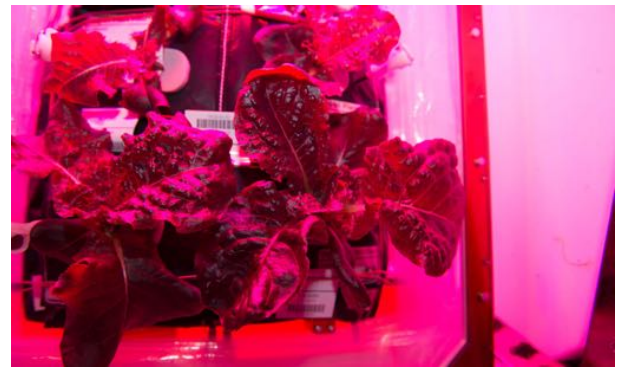
## **Bigger Menu For Astronauts**

Soon, astronauts will have a bigger menu. Scientists have grown lettuce in space. The lettuce is safe to eat. It tastes like lettuce grown on Earth. It is as nutritious as Earth lettuce, too.

Gioia Massa works for NASA. NASA studies outer space. Massa is the lead scientist on the lettuce-growing project. She said that growing food in space could be important for long missions. NASA will have two long missions in the next 10 years. One will go to the moon. Another mission will go to Mars.

Massa says space food needs a change. It may not work for long missions. The food loses its taste after a while. It also loses vitamins. Massa thinks this could be a problem. Astronauts may need more nutrition on long missions.

Space food has gotten better. However, astronauts get tired of eating the same thing. Massa says many astronauts lose weight.



### **Veggie Growing System**

Lettuce was grown on the International Space Station (ISS). The ISS is a science station in space. The vegetable growing system is called Veggie. Veggie has soil. It also has a light and water system.

The lettuce grew for one or two months. Some of the lettuce was eaten. The rest was sent to Earth for testing. Astronauts cleaned the lettuce before eating. Massa says this was to keep astronauts from getting sick.

The space lettuce was similar to Earth-grown lettuce. Some space lettuce had more nutrients than Earth lettuce. The space lettuce also had more bacteria. This may be because it grew in a warmer, wetter place. However, the bacteria was not dangerous.

NASA plans to grow other vegetables this year. However, astronauts will not be cooking. Massa says there is no place to cook on the ISS. That is why they are growing foods that taste good fresh.

## Quiz

- 1 Read the section "Bigger Menu For Astronauts."  
Which sentence from the section explains WHY astronaut food will not work for long space missions?
- (A) Scientists have grown lettuce in space.
  - (B) She said that growing food in space could be important for long missions.
  - (C) Massa says space food needs a change.
  - (D) Astronauts may need more nutrition on long missions.
- 2 What is a reason why astronauts are only growing foods that taste good fresh?
- (A) There is no place to cook in space.
  - (B) Astronauts like fresh foods most.
  - (C) They are easier to grow.
  - (D) Other foods cannot grow in space.
- 3 What happened because NASA planned two long space missions?
- (A) They needed to find a way to carry more food into space.
  - (B) They needed to find a way to grow food in space.
  - (C) Astronauts are training to survive with less food.
  - (D) Astronauts are planning to look for food in space.
- 4 WHY do many astronauts lose weight in space?
- (A) Everything is weightless in space.
  - (B) Their food is boring and not tasty.
  - (C) It is difficult to exercise in space.
  - (D) They lose their appetite in space.