

# Gopher Tortoise Salads

UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant

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Have you ever wanted to be an aquarium curator? Now you can explore part of their world by making a salad for a gopher tortoise! In this activity, you will learn how to make a salad for a gopher tortoise as well as either eat or compost the salad. Bon appetite!

Note: You will be making this salad as a snack for yourself and pretending you are an aquarium curator preparing turtle food. Gopher tortoises are a protected species and it is unlawful to keep one as a pet. You should not try to feed one or obtain one. Additionally, do not feed the diet listed here to any other animal or turtle species; the diet is specific to a gopher tortoise.



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## Materials:

- Plate
- Vegetables from the list below
- Your Imagination!

## Part 1: Create a Gopher Tortoise Salad

### Plan your Salad

Planning is a very important step. You want to make sure you are feeding your tortoise the right foods! Here is a list of foods your Gopher Tortoise can eat:

Greens	Vegetables	Fruits	Breakdown
Grape Leaves	Green Beans	Saw Palmetto Berries	80% Greens 20% Vegetables Occasional fruit
Endive	Broccoli	Prickly Pear Cactus	
Escarole	Carrots	Apple	
Kale	Sweet Potatoes	Banana	
Romaine lettuce	Zucchini	Blackberries	
Leaf lettuce	Cactus pad	Watermelon	
Watercress	Cucumber	Raspberries	
Mustard greens	Squash	Strawberries	
Collard greens		Blueberries	

**IMPORTANT!** Never feed your tortoise: Rhubarb, Potato, Avocado, Raw or processed meat

### Create Your Salad

Choosing from the list above, start creating your salad. You want to make sure your gopher tortoise gets just the right amount of everything. Here's how to follow the breakdown:

Imagine you can have ten pieces in your salad. 8 pieces should be from the "greens" list and 2 pieces should be from the "vegetables" list. You can have a bit of fruit for dessert if you want!

### Additional Challenges

We like to give our turtles enrichment exercises to bring out natural behaviors. How does a gopher tortoise eat? How can you arrange your food to make it more challenging?

### Eating the Salad

Congrats! You have made a tortoise salad. You will notice you can eat all of these foods, too. Challenge yourself by eating your salad. To make it even harder, try not to use your arms.

If you do not want to eat your salad, ask if your parents would like to eat it or compost it to help recycle nutrients back to the Earth!