

17 October 2012 BST

HUFFPOST TECH

UNITED KINGDOM 

## Space Station Astronauts To Receive 'Veggie' Fresh Food Packs (PHOTOS)

Huffington Post UK | By Michael Rundle

Posted: 17/10/2012 10:23 BST Updated: 17/10/2012 10:35 BST



Astronauts aboard the International Space Station will cultivate fresh food via pre-packaged 'farms'.

The packages, which contain seeds and soil and are designed to be grown in space, [will arrive at the space station next year](#).

The Vegetable Production System ('Veggie' for short) will launch on SpaceX's third Dragon commercial resupply mission.

Normally fresh food only reaches the space station two or three times a year - and is usually eaten immediately.

The new system should enable astronauts to grow their own lettuce, bok choy or Chinese cabbage.

The system is about the same size as a microwave oven, and was built by Orbital Technologies Corporation. It uses half the energy needed to power a computer.



**Above: "Outredgeous" red leaf lettuce grows in a VEGGIE plant pillow.**

The plants are either planted in space or preloaded in small pillows made of Teflon-coated Kevlar. A reservoir beneath the pillows is used to water the plants and a roof mat also adds moisture through an automatic process.

Nasa said that the new plants also has psychological benefits.

"Crews report that having plants around was very comforting and helped them feel less out of touch with Earth," said Gioia Massa, a postdoctoral fellow in the Surface Systems Group of Kennedy's Engineering Directorate. "You could also think of plants as pets. The crew just likes to nurture them."

There are other plants aboard the ISS, but are mainly used for experiments and are not intended to grow food to eat.

"Our hope is that even though Veggie is not a highly complex plant growth apparatus, it will allow the crew to rapidly grow vegetables using a fairly simple nutrient and water delivery approach," said Howard Levine, Ph.D. and chief scientist at the Kennedy Space Center International Space Station Research Office.