There are a wide variety of salad greens available in Vermont, spanning across several plant families, each bearing a unique history.

**Arugula** is a spicy, mustard-like plant that is currently grown as a “specialty green” in Vermont. It is a member of one of the dominant families in our food system: Brassicaceae; broccoli, kale and rutabagas are also in this family. It is native to Europe and western Asia and was introduced to the United States by the colonists.

**Lettuce** is a member of the family Asteraceae, along with artichokes, marigolds and sunflowers. It is native to the eastern Mediterranean and boasts over 100 varieties. Thousands of years ago, it was most likely grown for the oil its seeds produced. Christopher Columbus introduced varieties of lettuce to North America during his second voyage in 1493.

**Spinach** is a member of the family Amaranthaceae, along with beets, chard and quinoa. It is native to Persia and was not introduced to the Greeks and Romans until the Moors brought it to Spain in the 11th century.

**Fun Facts**
- Arugula is nicknamed “salad rocket”, which is derived from the Latin word *eruca*, meaning caterpillar—this is most likely referring to the hairy stems some varieties possess.
- The word lettuce is derived from the Latin word *lactuca*, which stems from *lactus*, meaning “milk”; this name was designated because of the white resin the stems secrete when they’re cut.
- In China, lettuce represents good luck.
- During the Middle Ages, spinach leaves were sold in the form of round balls, called *espinoche*.
- Spinach contains more iron by weight than a ham burger.

**Sources:** High Mowing Seeds, The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods, The Visual Food Encyclopedia.