

PARSNIP (*Pastinaca sativa*)



Full Sun



Part Shade



PARSNIP

In the East and North, this root vegetable can be left in the ground all winter and dug up as needed for cooking. Freezing seems to improve the texture and gives parsnips a sweeter, more delicate taste.

In southern and western states where winters are mild, parsnips should be planted in fall and grown for a winter crop, because spring planting extends the warm growing season too long, making the parsnips woody and tasteless. Parsnips can be harvested in the fall or left in the ground all winter and lifted in the spring after the tops start to grow.

Planting and Culture

Since parsnip is a long-season crop, seed should be sown as early in spring as possible. Fresh seed should be secured each year. Slow to germinate, the seed should be soaked overnight before being planted out in a rich, deeply spaded, light soil. A generous amount of compost or some other humus should be added to enrich the soil and to provide good aeration and uniform moisture distribution.

Plant the seed thickly in rows about 18 inches apart. Radish seed should be planted alongside to mark the rows and keep the soil's crust from hardening before the parsnip seedlings appear. It is wise to mulch the rows after planting as the soil must remain cool and moist during the long germination period when the seed are in danger of drying out.

As the radishes become of edible size, pick them, and weed and thin the parsnip seedlings to stand six inches apart. Cultivate cleanly all season until the foliage touches between the rows.

Harvesting

Parsnips may be harvested at times when the ground has little else to offer. They may remain in the ground over winter and be dug up during a thaw, or they may be harvested just before the ground freezes hard and then stored in a root cellar for winter use. If left in the ground until spring, dig as needed until the new tops start to grow; then dig all that remain and store them in a cold place to prevent sprouting. After the growth of new tops begins, the roots lose flavor and soon become lean and limp as well as tough and stringy.

Varieties

Hollow Crown is the all-time favorite variety. White Model and All American are also good. Premium is a variety suitable for shallow soils.

Serving Suggestion

A good way to prepare parsnips is to parboil them, slice them, turn them gently in butter until

golden brown, and serve.