

RADISH (*Raphanus sativus*)



The RADISH through history

The radish is one of the first recorded cultivated vegetables and dates back to earliest historical times. The name "radish" comes from the Latin, *radix*, meaning a root. Although radishes do not supply many nutrients, they are a good source of vitamin C, and make a tasty appetizer or salad ingredient.

A hardy, quick-growing crop

Used in succession planting, radishes are very easy to cultivate and can be grown in any part of the country if planted at the proper time. They are frequently used to mark rows in the garden because of their quick germination and rapid growth.

Radish seed is often mixed with slow-germinating beet seed so that the radishes will mark the beet row and make hoeing easier.

Planting and culture of Radish types

There are three types of radishes: the early, the midseason and the late.

Early:

The early, or spring, radish requires the cool spring or fall months to develop well. While spring radishes may be sown during the warm months, they seldom produce good, edible roots then. Instead, roots are very small and pungent, and the plants soon shoot to seed. Radishes prefer a cool, moist, loose, and fertile soil. If planted in heavy soils, the roots are apt to be misshapen and have a number of fibrous lateral roots. Compost or well-rotted manure may be used in large amounts in growing early radishes. The spring types will mature in 20 to 30 days. Succession plantings can be made a week apart during April and May, beginning as soon as the ground can be worked. For fall crops succession plantings can be made during August and September.

Sow the seed in rows 12 to 18 inches apart, and cover it 1/2 inch deep. Thin the plants to about one to two inches apart in the row. Radishes grow so quickly they do not need much care, and cultivation is almost unnecessary. Since the roots are small and essentially surface feeders, deep hoeing and raking does more harm than good. Radishes may be a nuisance because they have to be planted so often for a continual supply, but they make up for this by not requiring much attention after planting.

Midseason:

In general, the soil and fertilizer requirements of midseason or summer radishes are the same as those of the early types, but summer varieties are much more heat resistant. Summer radishes should be sown about 3/4 inch deep, in rows about ten to 15 inches apart, and thinned to three to five inches apart in the row.

Since these roots require a longer period to develop (30 to 40 days) and will withstand heat, seed may be sown in successive plantings every week from May to the middle of August.

Late:

Late or winter radishes do well in the North only during the fall months, but they can be grown throughout the winter months in the South. Because of their large size, they must have more generous spacing than the other two types. Winter radishes are generally sown 3/4 inch deep, in rows 18 to 20 inches long with six inches between plants in the row. Sixty to 70 days are required to mature a crop from seed.

Most of the winter radish crop is harvested after the first fall frost and placed in storage. Place them in a well-drained, straw-lined trench and cover them with two or three alternating layers of straw or leaves, and earth. Radishes are extremely cold resistant and can be kept in storage for up to three or four months.

Radish insects and diseases

If radishes grow rapidly enough, they are little bothered by disease. Insects, however, may be a problem. Leafhoppers will attack leaves only if they have been allowed to dry out. Root maggots can be discouraged by growing radishes in soil that has not grown another member of the Cabbage family in three years. If maggots, wireworms or borers are excessively active, however, large quantities of unleashed wood ashes should be raked in along the rows.

Radishes are sometimes planted as a trap crop to attract root maggots away from onions. Maggot-infested radishes are then removed and discarded. Liberal amounts of mature compost will also discourage pests.

Harvesting Radishes

Harvesting consists of merely pulling the radishes from the ground. The early ones can be harvested when they are big enough to eat, usually about 20 to 30 days after planting. The summer radishes can be harvested in five to six weeks, and the winter radishes can be either pulled in about nine weeks for immediate use, or left in the ground until frost comes.

Varieties of Radish

Spring varieties include French Breakfast, Champion, Red Boy, and Burpee White. The best summer types are White Icicle, Scarlet King, All Season, and Silver Dollar. Hardy winter types are White Chinese and Black Luxury.