

Radish



Radish is a cool-season, fast-maturing, easy-to-grow vegetable. Garden radishes can be grown wherever there is sun and moist, fertile soil, even on the smallest city lot. Early varieties usually grow best in the cool days of early spring, but some later-maturing varieties can be planted for summer use. The variety French Breakfast holds up and grows better than most early types in summer heat if water is supplied regularly. Additional sowings of spring types can begin in late summer, to mature in the cooler, more moist days of fall. Winter radishes are sown in midsummer to late summer, much as fall turnips. They are slower to develop than spring radishes; and they grow considerably larger, remain crisp longer, are usually more pungent and hold in the ground or store longer than spring varieties.



Recommended Varieties

Spring

- Burpee White** (25 days to harvest; round; smooth white skin)
- Champion** (28 days, large, round, red)
- Cherry Belle** (22 days, round, red)
- Cherry Queen Hybrid** (24 days, deep red, round, slow to become pithy)
- Early Scarlet Globe** (23 days; globe-shaped, small taproot, bright red)
- Easter Egg** (25 days; large, oval; color mix includes reddish purple, lavender, pink, rose, scarlet, white)
- Fuego** (25 days; round, red; medium tops; resistant to fusarium, tolerant to blackroot/black scurf)
- Plum Purple** (25 days, rounded, large, deep magenta)
- Snow Belle** (30 days, attractive, round, white, smooth)

For Spring or Summer Use

- French Breakfast** (23 days, oblong red with white tip)
- Icicle** (25 days, long, slim, tapered white)

Winter (for storage)

- China Rose** (52 days, white)
- Chinese White** (60 days; large, long, square-shouldered, blunt-tipped, creamy white roots)
- Round Black Spanish** (55 days; rough, black skin, white flesh)
- Tama Hybrid** (70 days; daikon type; roots as long as 18 inches, with 3 inch diameter; smooth, white; blunt tip)

When to Plant

Spring radishes should be planted from as early as the soil can be worked until mid-spring. Make successive plantings of short rows every 10 to 14 days. Plant in spaces between slow-maturing vegetables (such as broccoli and brussels sprouts) or in areas that will be used later for warm-season crops (peppers, tomatoes

and squash). Spring radishes also can be planted in late winter in a protected cold frame, window box or container in the house or on the patio. Later-maturing varieties of radishes (Icicle or French Breakfast) usually withstand heat better than the early maturing varieties and are recommended for late-spring planting for summer harvest. Winter radishes require a much longer time to mature than spring radishes and are planted at the same time as late turnips (usually midsummer to late summer).

Spacing & Depth

Sow seed 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep. Thin spring varieties to 1/2 to 1 inch between plants. Winter radishes must be thinned to 2 to 4 inches, or even farther apart to allow for proper development of their larger roots. On beds, radishes may be broadcast lightly and thinned to stand 2 to 3 inches apart in all directions.

Care

Radishes grow well in almost any soil that is prepared well, is fertilized before planting and has adequate moisture maintained. Slow development makes radishes hot in taste and woody in texture.

Radishes mature rapidly under favorable conditions and should be checked often for approaching maturity. Harvest should begin as soon as roots reach edible size and should be completed quickly, before heat, pithiness or seedstalks can begin to develop.

Harvesting

Pull radishes when they are of usable size (usually starting when roots are less than 1 inch in diameter) and relatively young. Radishes remain in edible condition for only a short time before they become pithy (spongy) and hot. Proper thinning focuses the harvest and avoids disappointing stragglers that have taken too long to develop.

Winter varieties mature more slowly and should be harvested at considerably larger size. Once they reach maturity, they maintain high quality for a fairly long time in the garden, especially in cool fall weather. Size continues to increase under favorable fall conditions. *Daikon* or *Chinese radish*, can achieve particularly large size and still maintain excellent quality. Winter radishes can be pulled before the ground freezes and stored in moist cold storage for up to several months.

Common Problems

Root maggots may tunnel into radishes. These insects are more common above 40 degrees north latitude. Apply a suggested soil insecticide before planting if this insect previously has been a problem.

Questions & Answers

Q. What causes my radishes to crack and split?

A. The radishes are too old. Pull them when they are younger and smaller. A flush of moisture after a period of relative dryness also may cause mature roots to burst and split. Try to avoid uneven moisture availability.

Q. Why do my radishes grow all tops with no root development?

A. There may be several reasons: seed planted too thickly and plants not thinned (though some roots along the outside of the row usually develop fairly well even under extreme crowding), weather too hot for the spring varieties that do best in cool temperatures (planted too late or unseasonable weather) and too much shade (must be really severe to completely discourage root enlargement).

Q. What causes my radishes to be too "hot"?

A. The "hotness" of radishes results from the length of time they have grown rather than from their size. The radishes either grew too slowly or are too old.

Selection & Storage

Summer Radish

Radishes have often been dismissed as decoration and garnish. They are actually members of the cruciferous vegetable family so eat the greens. Because they vary in keeping quality, radishes are classified as winter or summer. Summer radishes are the small ones of bold red, pink, purple, white or red and white. They may be globe-shaped or elongated, fiery hot or mild.

Harvest summer radishes when they are small and tender for optimal flavor. Oversize summer radishes can become tough, woody, hollow and strong in flavor. To check a large radish squeeze gently, if it yields to pressure it is likely to be fibrous. These will do well in the compost heap.

Winter Radish

Harvest winter radishes when they are large and mature. Winter radishes may be white, black or green. Black radishes have a pungent flavor and should be used sparingly. Remove greens and roots before storing black radishes. Chinese radishes, round and fat, are milder in flavor. Remove greens before storing; remove roots just before preparing.

The word daikon means "great root" in Japanese. In cool weather, daikon growth is quick and steady. The fully mature daikon can grow up to about 18 inches long and weighs 5 or 6 pounds. There are several varieties. Some are thin and long, while others are short and round. All radish greens are edible.

Storage

Save the young thinnings of both summer and winter radishes. They are delicious with tops and bottoms intact. Both summer and winter radishes store well in the refrigerator once the tops have been removed. The radish leaves cause moisture and nutrient loss during storage. Store greens separately for 2-3 days. Refrigerate radishes wrapped in plastic bags for 5 to 7 days. Winter radish varieties can be stored for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

Nutritional Value & Health Benefits

The popular red globe radish is low in calories with an abundance of flavor and crunch. A 1/2 cup serving (about 12 medium) of sliced radishes provides a goodly amount of potassium, vitamin C, folate and fiber. Winter radishes such as daikons are similar in nutrients.

Nutrition Facts (1/2 cup fresh sliced raw red globes)

Calories 12
Protein 0.35 grams
Carbohydrates 2.0 grams
Dietary Fiber 1 gram
Potassium 134.56 mg
Folate 15.66 mcg

Preparation & Serving

Summer and winter radishes are most often eaten raw. Use a stiff vegetable brush and scrub radishes under cold running water. Do not peel summer or black radishes. Pare away the top and root end then slice, dice, shred, or serve whole. Large Chinese and Japanese varieties hold up well during cooking. They can be eaten raw, preserved or substituted in any recipe calling for turnips.

Daikon radishes are thought to aid in digestion, especially the digestion of fatty foods. It is a common ingredient in Japanese cooking and is always grated and added to tempura dipping sauce. Young daikons can be eaten raw but the larger (more than 8 inches long) ones must be cooked. Always peel daikons. Cut up and simmered in stews and soups, daikon tastes light and refreshing rather than heavy or starchy. Daikons are often cut into paper-thin slices by talented Japanese chefs.

Daikon greens are delicious too. They can be washed, stacked, rolled into a scroll, and cut crosswise. This produces thin julienne strips which are traditionally salted and left standing for an hour. The moisture is squeezed out. The leaves are then chopped and stored in glass jars for up to a week in the refrigerator. The Japanese stir them into warm rice, they can also be added to soups and other recipes.

Home Preservation

Due to the high water content, summer radishes do not freeze well and they are not recommended for drying. They become limp, waterlogged and develop oxidized color, aroma and flavor upon thawing. Summer and winter radishes are best pickled. Although the Japanese have a procedure for drying daikon shavings, which are added to many different recipes.

Pickled Daikon and Carrots

This is a refrigerator pickle, allow it to chill overnight before serving. Store for up to 4 weeks. Red globe radishes may be substituted for daikons in this recipe.

- 1/2 pound daikon or other white radish
- 1 carrot shredded
- 1 tablespoon canning salt
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)

1. Wash, peel and shred radishes if using daikon. Do not peel red globe radishes before shredding. Put vegetables in a bowl, sprinkle on the salt and mix well. Let stand for 30 minutes.
2. Drain off water and squeeze vegetables as dry as possible.
3. In a small bowl combine vinegar, sugar and pepper flakes.
4. Place in a clean quart-size jar and refrigerate overnight or 6-8 hours. Serves 6.

Recipes

Summer and winter radishes can add refreshing crispiness to salads and sandwiches. They make a delicious topping for bagels. Use them as hors d'oeuvres, snack on them, or add winter radishes to liven up many different recipes.

Open-faced Radish Sandwiches

- 4 bagels cut in half or 8 slices black bread
- 8 ounces low-fat cream cheese
- 6 small globe radishes
- salt and freshly ground pepper

1. Spread bagels or bread slices with 1/4 inch cream cheese.
2. Using a sharp knife or mandolin, slice radishes very thin. Overlap radish slices on top of the cream cheese. Sprinkle each sandwich with salt and pepper. Cover with damp paper towels until serving.

Radish Confetti Salad

- 4 large radishes, washed and trimmed
- 1 medium carrot, trimmed
- 1 celery stalk, trimmed
- Six to eight chives, cut into one-inch pieces
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup sweet rice vinegar

1/4 cup olive oil
1/2 teaspoon celery seed
6 romaine lettuce leaves

1. Using a mandolin or box grater, shred the radishes and carrots.
2. Cut the celery into matchstick-size pieces. Toss the vegetables together in a medium bowl.
3. In a small bowl whisk together olive oil, vinegar, celery seed and salt and pepper. Pour over vegetables and toss. Serve on a bed of romaine lettuce.

Radishes with Pasta and Radish Greens

24 radishes, sliced (about 2 cups) with green tops
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
12-ounce package short pasta such as penne or shells, cooked
1/4 cup cooking water from pasta
1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
Salt and pepper

1. Separate the greens from the radishes. Wash greens in several changes of cool water. Drain or spin dry in a salad spinner. Wash and trim radishes. Thinly slice radishes.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet or wok. Add onions and cook just until they begin to soften. Add radish slices and greens. Cover and cook for 5 to 7 minutes or until greens wilt and radishes look almost translucent. Remove from heat. Season with salt and pepper. Taste. Adjust seasoning.
3. Add drained pasta to skillet and toss. Add cooking liquid from pasta and stir. Sprinkle on the cheese and toss. Pass additional cheese if desired.