

RADISH

Gardening tips provided by
Jefferson Farm & Gardens



Overview

The radish, *Raphanus sativas*, is a cool season vegetable of the cabbage family and is related to cauliflower, cabbage, turnips, and rutabagas. In Oaxaca, Mexico, the 23rd of December is deemed the Night of Radishes, when artists carve large radishes (up to 10 pounds) into scenes depicting the birth of Jesus and figurines illustrating the history and culture of the Oaxacans.

Choosing Varieties

There are many radish varieties available that differ in days till maturity, root shape, and root color, as well as other traits. A few recommended varieties for Missouri and other Midwest states are:

Spring Radishes

- Burpee White (globe shaped, white)
- Cherry Belle (round, smooth, and bright red)
- Easter Egg (red, white, and purple roots)

Winter Radishes

- Miyashige (cylindrical white root/green crown)
- Red Meat (pink flesh with green/white skin)

Spring radishes are what most people bring to mind when they visualize a radish. They are small and mature quickly. Winter radishes are Oriental varieties that need cooler weather and short day lengths to thrive.

It is recommended to try a few varieties to determine overall plant performance and personal preference.

Planting Tips

The radish is a cool season vegetable. It can be spring or fall planted.

In Missouri, seeds can be sown as early as mid-March in the spring or can be planted in August for a fall crop. They should be planted $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep in rows that are about 10 inches apart. Sowing instructions for a particular variety can usually be found on the seed packet.

Spring radishes should be thinned to a spacing about 1 inch, while the winter radishes should be given more room

to develop larger roots (2-4 inches). If radishes are not thinned, root formation is often inhibited. To extend the harvesting season of radishes, plant repeatedly every 10 days.

Soil Fertility and Pest Control

Radish seeds should be planted in well-drained soils and would benefit from the addition of nutrients either in the form of a complete fertilizer or aged compost.

To prevent weeds, retain moisture, and to keep soil temperatures down, mulch can be applied around the plants. Radish plants should receive enough water to keep them vigorously growing without waterlogging the soil.

Flea beetles are pests to radishes by eating holes in the young leaves, slowing growth. Flea beetles can be controlled with chemicals containing the organic compound pyrethrin (be sure to follow product labels).

To prevent diseases like clubroot and black rot, rotate members of the cabbage family with other crops each year.

Harvesting

Spring radishes can be harvested when they are about 1 inch in diameter by pulling on the top, which pries the root out of the ground. Winter radishes take longer to mature and should be harvested at a larger size than spring radishes. If grown too long or slowly, the radish becomes hot and pithy.

Seed Sources

Seeds can be ordered from mail order companies via phone or website. Johnny's Selected Seeds (1-877-564-6697, johnnyseeds.com) and Burpee Seeds (1-800-888-1447, burpee.com) are two companies that sell radish varieties.

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