



Harvest of the Month

Radishes



Botany

The scientific name of radish is *Raphanus sativus*, which in Latin means “easily reared” giving insight into how quick and easy radishes are to grow! They are part of the Brassica family, cousins to the mustards and cole crops such as broccoli, cabbage and kale. This family is known for its phytochemical compounds; in radishes it’s some of these chemicals that are responsible for the pungent, spicy flavor.

There are two main types of radishes, often called Summer radishes and Winter radishes. They are distinguished by the length of time they take to mature, with Summer radishes going from seed to harvest in under a month, while Winter radishes can take up to two months to mature. All parts of the radish plant are edible and there are varieties to grow specifically if you want sprouts, greens, or seed pods instead of roots.

Good Varieties for School Gardens

- Round red radish with quick maturity: Crunchy King
- Cylindrical French type: Nelson
- Overwintering Watermelon type: Red Meat
- Fall harvest Daikon: Miyashige

Social Sciences

Radishes are an ancient crop originating in Asia. Both cultivated and wild radishes can now be found all over the temperate growing areas of the world, and are used in very different ways in different regions. In China and Japan, most of the radish crop is fermented or quick pickled. In China, some large radishes are grown for the oil in the seeds. In India, the rat-tailed radish is grown for its fleshy edible seed pods. In Germany, thinly sliced white radishes are served with salt as a nibbler to accompany the famed beer. In France, slices of slender red and white radishes are served along with buttered bread as an appetizer.

Rábano means radish in Spanish.

Nutrition

Radish roots are 85% water. They are a good source of fiber and Vitamin C.

Growing Tips

The terms “Summer radish” and “Winter radish” are misleading, as all radishes need to grow in cool weather. You can plant both types starting in the very early Spring for late Spring/early Summer harvest, and then plant again in the Fall for late Fall/Winter harvests. Because radishes are a quick crop, succession planting is important if you want a regular supply. Plant a few seeds every week or so as long as they’ll mature before the weather gets hot. If radishes are grown in hot, dry conditions, roots may become tough, pithy, or too spicy.

Care & Maintenance

Proper thinning is important if you want a nicely formed root. If radishes are crowded they may bolt before forming a swollen root (if this happens the flowers and seed pods are edible, though!).

Harvest

Quick maturing radishes are easily harvested by pulling by hand. Be sure to harvest as soon as they are ready. Just a couple days too many and they will be oversized and pithy. Longer maturing varieties like Daikon may need to be harvested by fork in order not to break the root.

Fun Idea

Because radishes mature so quickly, they can be easily interplanted with other crops in your garden. One idea is to sow some radish seeds into the rows with your carrot seeds. The radish seeds come up very quickly and will help you remember where the carrots are planted, as they take over twice as long to germinate.

