



Root Vegetables

Seed to Harvest Fact Sheet

Root vegetables are the part of a plant that grow underground and are consumed as food. The most common root vegetables are potatoes, yams, beets, carrots, jicama, parsnip, radish, rutabaga, turnip, sweet potato, taro, water chestnut, ginger, turmeric, garlic, onion, and shallots. Most root vegetables are considered cool season crops and like to be planted directly into the soil.



Sunlight & Temperature

- Grows best with 6-8 hours of sunlight a day
- Prefers temperatures between 55°F to 75°F
- Sweet potato is a warm season root vegetable and prefers temperatures between 65°-95°



Direct Seed or Transplant

- Direct sow seeds into the soil
- Plant in early spring as soon as the soil can be worked or late summer for a fall harvest
- Some root vegetables (radish, carrots, turnips, and rutabagas) need to be thinned at least 2-4 inches between each plant
- Root crops do not like to be transplanted



Watering

- Keep soil moisture levels consistent
- Water regularly, but not excessively
- Root vegetables require about 1-2 inches of water per week



Common Pests & Control

- The most common pests that affect root vegetables are leaf miners, aphids, whiteflies, cutworm, and flea beetles
- Common ways to protect root vegetables are to remove all infected debris and dispose of it (not in compost) and provide row covers; Keep the area clear of weeds



Common Plant Viruses & Disease

- The most common plant viruses and diseases of root vegetables are leaf spot, curly top virus, powdery mildew, rust, and mold
- Root vegetables need well-drained soil
- Remove any infected plants (sterilize between handling), rotate crop varieties to prevent buildup of viruses and diseases present in the soil
- Select resistant or tolerant varieties



Maintenance

- All root vegetables need well-draining soil and do best in sandy loam and peat soils

Harvest

- Beets
 - Beets are ready to be pulled up from their roots 8-9 weeks after seeds are sown; Roots are most tender when less than 2 inches across
- Onions
 - Can be lifted when their tops have fallen and begin to yellow; Allow onions to dry on the surface for 10-14 days until tops and necks are completely dry
- Parsnips
 - Should remain in the ground until the tops freeze in late fall
- Rutabagas
 - Harvest after they are 3 or more inches thick
- Turnips
 - Can be harvested when the roots reach a size of 2-3 inches; They mature in 45-60 days; Pull and cut off tops above the crown

Photo of turnips by Abbi Marrs

Recipes

You can find yummy root vegetable dishes on EatFresh.org!
Some include:

- Dig Into Roots (Quick snack idea)
- Root Vegetable Medley



Root Vegetable Joke

Why did people dance to the vegetable band?
Because it had a good beet!

Thank you to the CalFresh Healthy Living, UC Garden Workgroup members who helped develop this material.

Sources

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