

## Harvest and storage

Harvest root crops when roots are large enough to use. Parsnips usually taste best when harvested after freezing weather in the fall. Root crops (other than radishes) can be left in the soil and heavily mulched with straw or leaves. They can be dug throughout the winter and early spring.

### Harvest size (diameter):

Beets	1.5 - 3 inches
Carrots	1 - 1.5 inches
Rutabaga	3.5 - 5 inches
Turnips	1.75 - 2.75 inches

For more information and other helpful educational materials, contact:

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# Green Tips

## Plant and Grow Guides

### *Root Crops (GT 115)*

Root crops are vegetables such as beets, carrots, radishes, parsnips, turnips and rutabagas. They are high in vitamins and low in calories. They can be eaten in a variety of ways, cooked or raw. Root crops are easy to grow and not bothered by few insects or diseases.

Root crops are cool season crops and are harvested during cool weather. Except for turnips, they should be planted early in the spring when soil temperatures are 50 degrees F and above. Turnips need 60 degrees F and above.



### Preparing the soil

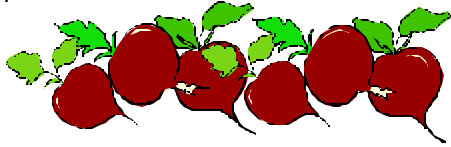
A good harvest begins with careful soil preparation:

- Select a location for the garden that gets at least 6 - 8 hours of sun daily.
- Follow your soil test recommendation or use one pound of 5-0-20 per 100 square feet. Apply and then turn over soil to incorporate.
- Spread another pound of fertilizer per 100 square feet after tilling.
- Till or dig to a depth of 10-12 inches deep to loosen soil and to remove rocks and any other debris. Crumble the soil thoroughly. Lumpy, rocky or compacted soil produces misshapen or small root crop vegetables.

- Work in compost or rotted manure.

## Varieties

**Beets** can be classified by their root color. There are red (the most common color), golden, purple, white, candy stripe or Chiogga which is white with red rings.



**Carrots** are classified by shape and length of root. There are four main types:

Chantenay-short carrots with wide shoulders and distinctly colored cores. Often grown by home gardeners.

Danvers-large and medium long and mainly used for processing

Imperator-long carrots with small shoulders and a tapered tip.

They are usually grown for fresh consumption.

Nantes-these type carrots are medium in length, uniform diameter and a blunt tip. Most commonly used for mini-carrots, bunching and slicing.

**Parsnips** belong to the carrot family but are yellow and distinctly flavored.

**Radishes** are one of the easiest and fastest vegetables to grow. When starting with seed, it can take approximately one month to produce a crop. Roots are globe-shaped. Because most radishes are eaten raw, it is best to periodically put in some seed, rather than the whole package at one time. Old radishes can become woody and hot and may go to seed. Daikon is a large radish variety that is oriental in origin and is shaped like a giant carrot. It is eaten raw or pickled.

**Rutabaga** is believed to be an ancient cross between cabbage and turnip. Rutabagas have a swollen “neck” bearing ridges that protrudes slightly above ground. The root may be purple, white or yellow with white or yellowish flesh. They grow larger than turnips and are denser in texture with a more distinct flavor.

**Turnips** are classified by their round, flat or cylindrical roots. The most common variety has white flesh and white skin with a rose colored top. Another popular edible turnip has green skin and white flesh. Other varieties are golden yellow or red skinned. In Scotland, they are referred to as “neeps.”

Beets and turnips have the distinction of also having edible leaves or greens (see “Growing Greens”).

## Planting

Get root crops off to a good start:

- Mark off straight rows 18-24 inches apart (6 -12 inches for radishes)
- Make a shallow furrow with a hoe ½ inch deep.
- Put seeds in the furrow, with 15-20 seeds per foot.
- Rows of slow germinating kinds (beets, carrots, parsnips are often marked with a few radish seeds. Radish seeds germinate quickly and mark the rows.
- Cover seeds lightly with fine, crumbled soil.
- Keep seeds and soil damp until germination.

## Thinning

When plants are several inches tall, pull the smaller or weaker ones to make room for root development. If thinned carrots or radishes are large enough, they can be eaten.

## Water and Weeds

Plants need one inch of water a week. Mulching can slow moisture loss from the soil surface. Remove weeds when they are small as not to disturb roots. If weeds are too large, cut them off.