

## Home Gardening Series

# Horseradish

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Vegetables

### Environment

**Light** – sunny  
**Soil** – well-drained, deep  
**Fertility** – medium  
**pH** – 6.0 to 7.0  
**Temperature** – cool  
**Moisture** – moist

### Culture

**Planting** – root cutting in spring  
**Spacing** – 2 x 4 inches  
**Hardiness** – hardy perennial  
**Fertilizer** – medium feeder

### Horseradish – *Armoracia rusticana* – Perennial

Horseradish is native to southeast Europe, but it is grown all over the world, even in the tropics where it is limited to higher altitudes. It has been used by the Egyptians and Greeks for over 3,500 years and is one of the bitter herbs at Passover.

Horseradish is a hardy, perennial vegetable used for condiments. It is savored for its hotness when ground or grated and mixed in sauces for seafood, pork and beef dishes. Most home gardeners do not grow horseradish today because the prepared product is readily available in grocery stores. The connoisseur, however, continues to grow horseradish for the freshness. A few plants provide ample roots.

### Cultural Practices

Horseradish is started from crown divisions or root cuttings. Plant whenever the soil can be worked in

early spring. Place roots 18 to 24 inches apart in shallow trenches and cover with a ridge or mound of soil to a depth of 4 to 5 inches.

Horseradish grows best in deep, loose, fertile soil with abundant moisture. The plants grow 2 to 2 1/2 feet high, and the roots make their greatest growth during the cool weather of fall.

Most gardeners grow horseradish as a perennial along one end of the garden and keep it weeded by shallow cultivation or heavy organic mulch. Apply water if the plants wilt during hot weather in the late summer and early fall. Dig roots any time from late fall (after a hard frost) until growth starts in the spring. Leave some small, pencil-sized roots for next year's harvest or plant them in another row.

Prepare your favorite sauce soon after digging. Surplus sauce can be frozen in small containers for year-round use. The roots can be cleaned and stored in a cold (32 degrees F), moist space and used as needed. The prepared product must be kept in a closed container and refrigerated between servings. Even under these conditions, horseradish turns brown and develops an off-flavor in four to six weeks. For this reason, gardeners like to prepare fresh horseradish to meet their immediate needs.

Horseradish is grown commercially as an annual crop. Set roots, which are 10 to 12 inches long,

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## Cultivars

| Crop        | Variety            | Days to Maturity | Seed/ 100 Ft of Row | Sources (see "Sources" paragraph below) | Remarks  |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| Horseradish | Maliner Kren       | 180              | 50                  | 8                                       | True bohemian horseradish; large, white roots. |
|             | Big Top            | 180              | 50                  | 26                                      |  |
|             | Hybrid Horseradish | 180              | 50                  | 12                                      | Big, smooth roots; pungent.                    |

are planted in early spring; the plants are dug up in the fall. "Lifting" the roots removes the side roots from the upper portion of the set root, forcing the plant to develop one large main root. These one- to two-pound roots are sold to commercial grinders. The sets, which grow from the bottom, are stored for planting the following year.

### Sources

For a list of sources referred to by number, request FSA6106, *Seed Sources: Vegetable and Herb*, for current address, telephone and web site.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. How is horseradish planted and grown?

A. Horseradish is grown from root cuttings. The root cuttings are planted with the small end down and the large end 2 to 3 inches below the soil surface. Plant in the spring and harvest the horseradish in late fall.

### Q. How long does it take horseradish to mature?

A. Horseradish is planted in the spring for harvesting in late fall. If not harvested yearly, it can quickly turn into a weed and take over a garden. Connoisseurs of horseradish recommend the plants be dug each fall eliminating the chance for them to get out of control. Most agree this improves the quality of the horseradish.

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