

Home Gardening Series

Parsnip

Craig R. Andersen
Extension Horticulturist -
Vegetables

Environment

Light – sunny/partial shade

Soil – well-drained loam

Fertility – rich

pH – 5.8 to 7.5

Temperature – cool

Moisture – moist

Culture

Planting – seed, early spring or late summer

Spacing – 2 to 3 inches

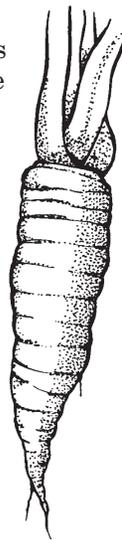
Hardiness – cool-season biennial

Fertilizer – heavy

Parsnip – *Pastinaca sativa*

Parsnip is a biennial native to Eurasia that grows wild in most parts of Europe and in the Caucasus. It was known to the ancient Greeks and Romans, but the fleshy forms used today were probably developed in the Middle Ages.

Parsnip is a hardy, full-season annual plant grown for its long, tapered root that resembles a white carrot. It is considered a winter vegetable, because its flavor is not fully developed until the roots have been exposed to near freezing temperatures for two to four weeks in the fall and early winter. The starch in the parsnip roots then changes to sugar, resulting in a sweet, nutlike flavor.



Cultural Practices

Planting Time

Plant seed in early March or April in a deep, well-prepared, fertile soil. Parsnip seed is short-lived. You must obtain a fresh supply each spring.

Spacing and Depth of Planting

Plant seeds 1/2 to 3/4 inch deep. To assure a good stand, plant two to three seeds per inch of row. Space rows 18 to 24 inches apart. Parsnip seed is slow to germinate, and some gardeners drop a radish seed every inch to mark the row and help break the soil crust. Thin seedlings to 2 to 4 inches apart. When the plants are too far apart, the roots become large and the edible portion develops a woody, fibrous texture.

Care

Keep young parsnip plants free of weeds by shallow hoeing or cultivation.

Harvesting

Parsnip should remain in the ground until the tops freeze in late fall. At this time, the roots may be harvested and stored or left in the garden to be used as needed. Gardeners who do not have storage facilities often mulch parsnip with straw so it can be harvested throughout the winter. Like beets and carrots, parsnip may be stored in outdoor vegetable pits or underground cellars

*Arkansas Is
Our Campus*

Visit our web site at:
<http://www.uaex.edu>

Cultivars

Crop	Variety	Days to Maturity	Seed/ 100 Ft of Row	Disease Resistance or Tolerance	Sources (see "Sources" paragraph below)	Remarks
Parsnip	All American	110	1/8 oz		6, 12, 22, 32	Smooth, white roots; broad at the shoulders and hollow crowned. Excellent keeper.
	Hollow Crown	125	1/8 oz		2, 5, 6, 27, 31, 32	Long, well-tapered roots; up to 18 inches long.
	Andover	120	1/8 oz	BC (R)	16, 32	Slim, gradually tapered, slim and firm root. Keeps 4-6 months.
	Javalen		1/8 oz	BC (R)		Slim, smooth, tapered roots.
	Harris Model	120	1/8 oz		6, 9, 32	Longer, slimmer roots than Hollow Crown. Smooth, white roots with tapered shape.
	Gladiator Hybrid	120	1/8 oz		32, 33	Large, Hollow Crown type; smooth, white skin with vigorous tops and rounded shoulders. Excellent taste, very sweet. Stores 4-5 months.

Abbreviations: **BC**: Brown Canker; **(R)**: Resistant

or under refrigeration at 32 degrees F with high (95 percent) humidity. Dig the roots (usually 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter and 7 to 8 inches long) with a spading fork. Yields frequently exceed 1 pound per foot of row.

Common Problems

Low soil fertility is a common problem. It can usually be overcome by sidedressing with a complete fertilizer in late May. Parsnip is relatively free of both insects and diseases.

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 Question

Q. What is parsnip?

A. Parsnip is commonly grown in Europe and in many northern areas of the United States. It is grown for its delicate-tasting, carrot-like roots which can grow up to 15 inches long and 3 to 4 inches across at the top. The plants are biennials but are grown as annuals and should be harvested before the second year's leaves start to grow.

DR. CRAIG R. ANDERSEN is Extension horticulturist - vegetables, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.