

Home Gardening Series

# Salsify

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Vegetables

## Environment

**Light** – sunny  
**Soil** – well-drained, deep  
**Fertility** – rich  
**pH** – 5.8 to 7.5  
**Temperature** – cool  
**Moisture** – moist

## Culture

**Planting** – seed late winter or late summer  
**Spacing** – 2 x 18 inches  
**Hardiness** – hardy  
**Fertilizer** – medium to heavy

## Salsify – *Tragopogon cupani* or *Scorzonera hispanica*

Salsify (also known as vegetable oyster or oyster plant because of the flavor of the cooked roots) is a hardy biennial that produces an edible root the first year. The top tends to spread, rather than grow upright, giving salsify a somewhat different appearance from most garden vegetables. Because of its ability to withstand hard freezing in the winter, salsify may be harvested until early spring. The tapered roots (1/2 to 3/4 inch in diameter and 8 to 10 inches long) are made into milk stew or cooked and served cold as a salad vegetable.



## Cultural Practices

### Planting Time

Salsify is grown in much the same way as parsnip. Plant the seed in deep, well-prepared, fertile soil in late spring or summer (about 100 days before freezing weather).

### Spacing and Depth of Planting

Plant seed 1/2 to 3/4 inch deep (10 to 12 seeds per foot of row) in rows 18 to 24 inches apart. When the seedlings are 2 inches high, thin to 2 to 4 inches apart.

### Care

Salsify is slow growing when young; frequent, shallow cultivation is necessary to remove weeds. It is free from most garden diseases and insects and will withstand dry conditions once it is well established.

### Harvesting

The flavor of salsify, like that of parsnip, is improved after several hard frosts in the fall cause a sweetening of the roots. Harvest any time through April. Cut off the leaves 1 inch above the roots; store the roots under conditions similar to those for storing parsnip. Gardeners without storage facilities may mulch the salsify rows with straw and dig the roots as needed throughout the winter. If allowed to grow a second year, salsify will send up a seedstalk and bloom.

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## Cultivars

Crop	Variety	Days to Maturity	Seed/ 100 Ft of Row	Sources (see "Sources" paragraph below)	Remarks
Salsify	Mammoth Sandwich Island	120	1/8 oz	2, 6, 22, 31	Easy to grow roots which have an oyster-like flavor. Best to harvest after a frost. An excellent keeper.

## Sources

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

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