

HOW TO GROW PARSNIPS !

As a member of the family Apiaceae, the parsnip counts among its close cousins the carrot, parsley, dill, fennel, cilantro, and celery. All of these bear tall umbels of flowers, but like the carrot, parsnip is biennial, and will not bloom or set seed until its second year of growth. Also like the carrot, the parsnip is grown for its substantial taproot, which is always served cooked. Another member of this family, the cow parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*), grows wild across North America, and is considered a noxious weed. In several areas in North America, cultivated parsnips have become weeds, considered the same species, but with some undesirable traits. Wild and cultivated parsnips will cross-pollinate.

Difficulty

Easy. Parsnips will do much better in the ground, so are not suited to containers.

Timing

Plant from late March to mid-July in a deeply dug bed. Most sources recommend direct sowing as soon as the ground is workable in the spring. A longer season results in a longer, thicker root.

Sowing

Seeds can take 3 weeks to germinate and will not push through crusted soil. Cover seeds with compost or put floating row cover over planting to shade the soil and conserve moisture. Sow 1cm (½") deep, 1-2cm (½ -1") apart.

Soil

Prepare the bed as you would for carrots. For even longer parsnips, you can dig or form holes 60cm (24") deep by jamming a crowbar or similar tool into the soil and working it back and forth.

Growing

Thin to 8cm (3") apart once plants are established. Weed carefully and keep watered. Aim to provide a constant, moderate supply of moisture and nutrients for a steady, slow growing period. A pH range of 6.0 to 8.0 works best for parsnips — as well as salsify and scorzonera.

Harvest

Flavour is best after a couple of good frosts. Dig parsnips from October 1st through the winter as needed. Protect from freezing in the soil with thick straw mulch if it is a cold winter. Parsnips keep better in well-drained soil. The average family will be supplied by a 6m (20') row.

Storage

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Store in the ground until use. Parsnips will last 4-6 months if stored in sawdust, leaves, or sand between (32-40F) at around 90% humidity.

Seed info

In optimal conditions at least 60% of seed will germinate. Soil temperature for germination: 10-25°C (50-75°F). Usual seed life: 1 year. Parsnips are peculiar among vegetables in that you should always use fresh seed. Some sources describe germination of parsnip seeds as "difficult."

Growing for seed

Parsnips are pollinated by insects. If growing for seed, isolate by 500m (¼ mile), and be aware that parsnips will cross-pollinate with wild, weedy types of the same species.

Pests & Disease

Carrot rust fly maggots injure the roots of parsnips. Use lightweight row cover to prevent insects from settling and laying eggs. Practice crop rotation.

Source:

www.westcoastseeds.com

Links:

Seeds:

<https://mckenzieseeds.com/collections/parsnip>

<https://www.westcoastseeds.com/collections/parsnip-seeds>

Other:

<https://www.harrowsmithmag.com/3240/eat-better-less>

A collage of logos and graphics. At the top left is the Harrowsmith & Sons logo with a basket of vegetables and the text 'Plant • Grow • Share a Row presents'. To its right is the 'GROW YOUR SOUP' logo featuring a bowl of soup with vegetables. Below these are the 'PLANT • GROW SHARE A ROW' logo, the 'Conseil canadien du COMPOST Council of Canada' logo, and the 'GARDEN WRITERS ASSOCIATION' logo. To the right of the collage is a text box with the following message:

As part of your garden this year, plant and grow an extra row of your favourite veggies and donate the harvest to your local food bank. Help us help all those in need.

Special thanks to McKenzie Seeds for their great growing information and their long-time support for Plant • Grow • Share A Row