

GROWING GUIDE FOR PARSNIPS

Binomial Name:	Pastinaca
Varieties:	White King
Start:	Seed or seedling
Germination:	15 - 28 days, 10°C to 30°C
Seed Life (viability):	1 -3 years
Soil:	Well drained
Sunlight:	Full sun
Sow Seeds:	3 - 5cm apart
Transplant/Thin to:	8 - 10cm apart
Ave. Days to Harvest:	100 - 130
Good Companions:	Chives, petunia, sweetcorn, yarrow
Bad Companions:	Carrot, celery, lettuce, onion, tomato

Sowing & Growing:

A cool weather, slow growing, white root crop which resemble carrots to which they are related. Perhaps the hardiest of all garden crops, parsnips don't develop their sweet, nutty flavour until after enduring frosts and cold weather in fall. Can be overwintered for harvest as soon as soil warms up in spring.

Sow seeds 1cm deep, 3cm apart, in rows 45 to 60cm apart, in early spring. Seeds germinate slowly, usually in about 2 to 3 weeks (longer in cold soils). To speed germination, keep soil moist. Sow along with radishes to break soil crust and mark row. Thin to 8 to 10cm spacing's. Trim instead of pulling to avoid disturbing roots of remaining plants.

Mulch to suppress weeds and retain moisture. Hill soil around base of plants to prevent greening of root shoulders.

Harvesting:

If you want really good tasting parsnips, and they're ready, dig some out right before the first frost. While some people think it's better to wait till just after a frost, I and many others think they're better tasting when harvested right before the first frost. The sugar which gives parsnips their flavour, and comes from conversion from its starch, is released as the weather becomes colder.

To keep root damage to a minimum, use a fork to dig under and root them out. Decide how many parsnips you want for the near future and you can just keep the rest over winter in the ground. Put about 10 to 15cm of mulch over them to keep them in good condition in the soil. The roots of parsnips are not damaged by the soil freezing. If you do keep some in the ground over winter, harvest them before the new growth emerges in the early spring.

You can store parsnips in a cool place for up to six months. In a refrigerator, two months is the maximum they last.