

Parsnip

Pastinaca sativa is a member of the Apiaceae (parsley) family. Varieties include Avonresister, Gladiator, Tender and True, Hollow Crown, All American, and Harris Model.

The parsnip is related to the carrot, which it resembles at least in its root and habit of growth. Unlike carrots, parsnip roots are creamy white outside and white inside. The parsnip top resembles that of broadleaf parsley. The top grows to 3 feet tall and the root to 20 inches long, like a deep-rooted carrot.

Market Information

Current production and yield. In California, the County Agricultural Commissioners reports parsnips are grown in Imperial, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo counties. A yield of about 4 tons per acre is equivalent to 50 pounds per 100 feet of row.

Culture

Climatic requirements. Parsnips do best when they mature in cool weather. Parsnips take a long time to mature — up to 180 days. Cold weather (including a preharvest freeze) enhances the flavor. The seeds are difficult to germinate in hot weather, and roots maturing in hot weather are of poor quality.

Propagation and care. Start parsnips from seed as you would carrots. Normally, parsnips take 120 to 180 days from seeding to root harvest. Seed should be planted ½ inch apart and ½ inch deep in rows 12 inches apart, or planted in two rows on a 36- or 40-inch bed. About 3 to 5 pounds of seed will plant an acre. Parsnips take as long as 18 days to germinate. Thin the plants to every 3 or 4 inches in rows. Never allow the soil to get too dry or the roots will



The parsnip is grown for its the carrotlike root, which grows as long as 20 inches. (Photo: Hunter Johnson)

get tough, split, and lack flavor. Fertilize parsnips as you would carrots.

Postharvest handling. The USDA storage recommendation is 32°F at 95 to 100% relative humidity, with an approximate storage life of 4 to 6 months.

Sources

Seed

Asgrow Seed Co., P.O. Box 5038, Salinas, CA 93915

W. Atlee Burpee & Company, 300 Park Avenue, Warminster, PA 18974

Ferry-Morse Seed Co., P.O. Box 4938, Modesto, CA 95352

Johnny's Selected Seeds, Foss Hill Road, Albion, ME 04910

Le Jardin du Gourmet, P.O. Box 75, St. Johnsbury Center, VT 05863

Nichols Garden Nursery, 1190 North Pacific Highway, Albany, OR 93721

Northrup King Co., P.O. Box 1825, Gilroy, CA 95021

Thompson and Morgan, P.O. Box 1308, Jackson, NJ 08527

More information

California Agricultural Statistics Service. 1980–1989. *County Agricultural Commissioner Data. 1980 through 1989 Annual Reports*. California Department of Food and Agriculture, Sacramento, CA.

Mansour, N. S. 1990. *Parsnips*. Vegetable Crops Recommendations. Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR.

USDA. 1987. *Tropical products transport handbook*. Agric. Handb. 668. USDA, Washington, DC.

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