

Growing Your Own

A beginner's guide to gardening

Radishes

Radishes are easy and fast to grow and only take up a little space. Radish roots are low in calories and high in vitamins C, K, and B6. Because they require little time and space, radishes are great vegetables for children to grow. This publication discusses only spring radishes.

Varieties

Most varieties grow well in Kentucky. It is okay to try varieties not on this list.

- **Champion**—large, round, red.
- **Cherry**—small, round, red, matures in about 3 weeks.
- **Cherry Belle**—has a deep pink root that is a globe shaped. Each root is very similar to the others. Leaves are dark green with a light green stem.
- **Easter Egg II**—oval shaped with a mix of colors (dark pink, light pink, white, and purple). The roots are slightly different shapes but almost the same size. Leaves and stems are both light green.
- **White Icicle**—long, white, carrot shaped



Cherry Belle
(All American Selections)



Easter Egg II
(Johnny's Selected Seeds)

How much to plant

A 3- to 5-foot row will supply enough radishes for a single person. Plant a 10- to 15-foot row for a family of four.

How and when to plant

Radishes can be planted March 1 in Western Kentucky, 5 to 7 days later in Central Kentucky, and mid-March in Eastern Kentucky. To have a continuous harvest, plant a new row of radishes again in 10 to 14 days. Stop planting in late April. Radish seeds planted in May will mature as weather becomes hot. Hot weather makes them taste bitter.



A row of radishes that needs to be thinned to one plant every inch. The leaves are crowded, and several pink radish roots are popping out of the soil.

(Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California-Davis, Bugwood.org)



Seedlings withering because of damping off, growing next to a healthy seedling.

(Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org)



A radish that has plenty of space to grow and develop a healthy, edible root. The pink root top is poking out of the soil a little, and the radish leaves look dark green with a pink vein.

(Matt Barton)



Radishes are low in calories and high in vitamins. They are a favorite in Kentucky's early gardens.

Radish seeds can also be planted in late winter (February). Protect these young plants from cold weather. The radish seeds may be planted in a cold frame or under plastic covers, or in pots or window boxes that can be moved inside during very cold weather. Plants need to be protected at night if temperatures drop into the low 20s.

Spring radishes do not produce good quality roots when planted in summer or fall.

Before planting, soil should be worked and smoothed. Do not use much fertilizer for radishes. Sow radish seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. For more guidance on direct seeding and how to prepare the soil, see *Growing Your Own: Preparing Your Garden* (NEP-219) at www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/NEP/NEP219/NEP219.pdf.

Plants should be thinned to about 1 inch apart. The leaves of the young plants that are removed can be washed and added to salads. Well-drained soils are important, but make sure the soil stays moist. Dry soils will slow growth, and radish roots will be bitter and woody. Radish roots will often crack or split when grown in dry soils that experience rain just before harvest.

Pests and Diseases

Radishes mature quickly and, as a rule, are not harmed by many pests or diseases. Some radish problems may be:

- Damping off in cold/wet weather, which is when a fungus or mold grows on seedlings and causes them to wither and topple over.
- Cutworms, which feed on the stem of the plant.
- Flea beetles, which make holes in the leaves.
- Root maggots, which burrow into the radish.



Small, black flea beetle eating holes in green plant leaf.

(Kansas Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org)



A cutworm eating the stem of a plant, cutting it in half. Cut off from its roots, the plant will no longer grow and will wither and die.

(R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company Slide Set, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Bugwood.org)



Vegetable root with damage caused by root maggots. The root is covered in bite marks and decaying plant material caused by maggots.

(Jessica Green, Oregon State University, Bugwood.org)



Harvested white and pink radishes and their leaves.

Harvest

Pull the radish from the ground when it reaches about 1 inch across the top. Most of the time, the top part of the radish will poke up through the soil. As roots become larger, they will become spongy with a hot flavor.

Serving

Radishes are most often eaten raw, either whole or sliced, with the tops removed. Be sure to wash radish roots well before eating. The leaves of the young plants that are removed can be washed and added to salads.

Storing

Radishes can be stored in the refrigerator for at least 7 days in a sealed bag. For longer storage of the radish roots, remove the leaves.

Clean Up

Any radishes not picked from the garden should be removed because pests growing on the plants will continue to multiply. An old radish is not good to eat and becomes tough. Radishes make a great first crop in the garden. Plant summer vegetables where radish plants have been removed.

Summary

Varieties

There are many varieties of radishes. Some grow better than others in Kentucky. Radish varieties that grow well in Kentucky are: Champion, Cherry, Cherry Belle, Easter Egg II, and White Icicle.

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seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep. Thin plants to about 1 inch apart if planted too thick.

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- Cutworms
- Flea beetles
- Root maggots

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