

Root vegetables are very popular with many gardeners. These are direct seeded into the garden since they require that little or no stress be put on the root. Since they do grow underground, be sure to roto-till or otherwise loosen the soil to a depth of at least 12 inches (30cm). Hilling your rows before planting can add a couple of inches to your soil depth. Most root vegetables do well in slightly acidic soil (pH of 6-6.5). Root crops can also be successfully grown in **deep** containers.

Taking care to space your rows wide enough apart so you do not compact the soil around the root crop when you are working in your garden is important to keep in mind. Compacting soil around root crops will stunt growth as well as cause deformities.

While your mature carrots can be left in the ground until the ground begins to actually freeze; the seeds require warmer soil to germinate. A soil temperature of at *least* 7 ½°C is required to get decent seed germination which can take up to three weeks. Do not allow the soil to 'crust' over the planted seed; this will cause very irregular germination. Carrot seeds are tiny. Plant them about ¼ inch (0.6 cm) deep and ½ inch (1.3 cm) apart. Thin them to 2 inches (5 cm) apart. Space your rows at least 12 inches (30 cm) apart to allow you access to the plants without harming the roots.

Beets are another popular root crop. Again, wait until the temperature of the soil is at least 7°C in order to get proper seed germination. Plant the seeds ½ - ¾ inch deep (1.3 – 2 cm); 1 inch (2.5 cm) apart; then thin to 2 – 3 inches (5 – 7.5 cm) apart. Allow 12 inches (30 cm) between your rows. When harvesting "beet greens" always remove only a few of the outer leaves, always being sure to leave sufficient leaves on the root so the growth of the root will not be interrupted.

Parsnips take a long time to mature. (120+ days from emergence) The seed requires a soil temperature of at least 16°C, and can take up to three weeks to germinate. The thing about parsnips, however, is that heavy frosts (even light ground freezing) is required to improve the flavour of the roots; so growing a successful parsnip crop is possible!... if Mother Nature co-operates with an early Summer and a nice long Fall season.

Rutabaga (also known as Swede) and turnips are not one and the same. Rutabagas take our entire season to mature, (90+ days) and the flavour is improved with the first fall frosts.

Rutabaga seeds require soil temperatures of at least 16°C to germinate properly. Plant about ¼ inch (0.6 cm) deep, one inch (2.5 cm) apart, then thin to 6 inches (15 cm) apart. Allow at least 18 inches (46 cm) between rows. Rutabagas can be 5-6 inches (12-15 cm) in diameter at harvest time.

Turnips should be seeded early, requiring a soil temperature of only 4 ½°C to achieve a good germination percentage. Turnips mature in about 60 days (some varieties even in about 30-40 days). Seed about ¼ – ½ inch (0.6-1.2 cm) deep, every inch (2.5 cm), then thin to at least 3 inches (7.5 cm) apart. Keep your rows about 1 foot (30 cm) apart. Turnips are harvested when they are about 3-4 inches (7.5-10 cm) in diameter. Earlier varieties are smaller. Harvesting the outer larger leaves can provide several harvests of "turnip greens". Always leave sufficient foliage per plant so as not to interrupt root development. There are turnip varieties that are grown solely for the greens. Quickly maturing varieties of turnip can also be planted in late summer, once the temperatures start to cool. They can survive light frosts once they are up and growing.

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