

How to Grow Your Own Parsnips

Parsnips are a great crop for the veg garden. They aren't as popular these days, which is a shame because they are easy to grow and taste gorgeous when cooked properly. They are also one of the few crops that can stay in the soil over winter.

Long-rooted parsnips need good, deeply cultivated, stone-free soils. But there are also short varieties that will grow in any reasonable soil.



Did You Know?

Parsnip plants don't need much nitrogen so you can grow them where a nitrogen-hungry crop like cabbage was grown the previous year



J F M A M J J A S O N D

Sow



Harvest



How to look after me

Soil: Light, stone-free

Position: Sunny or light shade

Location: Outdoors

Sowing

- Prepare the ground well in autumn – [here is a guide](#)
- Rake over the soil surface to a fine tilth in spring. Don't add manure as this may rot the roots
- Parsnip seed does not remain viable for very long so always sow freshly bought seeds
- Only sow the seeds once the weather has warmed up in spring. Germination is slow in cold weather
- Sow the seeds 2cm deep, 15cm apart in rows 30cm apart
- Sow two or three seeds at a time and thin the seedlings to leave the strongest plant

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Growing

- Thin seedlings to 10cm apart for long-rooted parsnips or 7cm apart for smaller roots
- Keep the area where the plants are growing weed-free
- Water if a dry spell occurs to prevent the soil from drying out



Harvesting

- Parsnips take at least 16 weeks to mature. They are ready when the foliage begins to die down in autumn
- Lift the parsnip roots carefully with a fork as you need them. There is no need to harvest them all at once
- The flavour of parsnips is much improved by frost, so you can leave the vegetables in the ground during winter and lift as needed. Mark the ends of the rows with a cane as the leaves die down when it gets cold
- Lift and store all roots by February



David's Top Tip

As parsnips are slow-growing, sow a fast catch crop such as radish or lettuce in between the parsnip rows. This also helps to remind you where you planted them!