



## The Easy and Versatile Radish

By Carol Quish, UConn Home and Garden Education Center

If you are looking for a quick vegetable crop to grow with the kids or for yourself, choose radishes. They will be ready to eat in about four weeks when sown from seed and are very easy to grow. Their tolerance for cold weather makes them successful for impatient gardeners who cannot wait to plant something, even though the weather is still chilly and the ground is cold. Hot dry weather will result in small, woody roots and bolting to seed production. Spring and fall plantings will give the best crops.

Select a spot with full sun and soil with high organic matter that is relatively rock free. Root crops can become distorted when they attempt to grow around stones. Fast growing radishes need a fertile soil with readily available nutrients. Use a balanced fertilizer, such as 5-10-10, as too much nitrogen will result in lots of leaves at the expense of crisp, tasty roots. Soil pH should be in the range of 5.8 to 6.8. Keep the soil moderately moist for fast growth and the development of tender roots with a milder taste.

Plant the seeds of the small, round varieties of radish one half inch deep and one inch apart in rows four inches away from each other. Larger varieties of radishes will need wider spacings to give them more room for growth.

French breakfast radishes will also need more space. They are elongated and red in color gradually turning white at the tip. Typically, this variety is served raw with morning baguette and strong coffee, or roasted or stir-fried for other meals. Japanese Daikon radish is much larger, up to 18 inches long. They are eaten raw or fermented. Some cultures use them in Kimchee. Daikon radish is also used as a soil conditioner as their deep roots break up compaction. They can be grown as a cover crop, leaving the entire plant to decompose in place to add organic matter to the field.

Radishes are a peppery root crop reported to be an aid in digestion. They are rich in vitamin C and potassium. The roots of the radish can be eaten raw, cooked or even pickled. If you let the plant mature, the seed pods are a delicacy. Add radish seeds to a seed sprouting jar to grow zesty sprouts that are great on a sandwich. They also make a good addition to micro-greens for salads.

Let a few seed pods ripen in the garden and often you will have a fall crop of self-seeded radishes.

Pests of radishes include flea beetles, slugs, and cabbage root maggots. Nothing is worse than pulling a perfect bright-red orb of radish and finding a brown tunnel throughout the inner flesh from the larval stage of the cabbage root maggot. Cover the newly seedlings with row cover to keep the adult root maggot fly from laying her eggs on the soil next to the developing root. This exclusion barrier will also keep the flea beetles from jumping onto the leaves to feed, making holes.

Slugs will eat the entire plant, leaving only their slime trail and an empty space where the small plant once was. Slugs can be trapped in bowl of beer set into the soil surface. Remove and destroy the slugs in the morning as they are nocturnal feeders.



For questions on growing radishes or on other gardening topics, feel free to contact us, toll-free, at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center at (877) 486-6271, visit our website at [www.ladybug.uconn.edu](http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu) or contact your local Cooperative Extension center.