

## How to grow turnips and rutabagas

### Turnip (*Brassica rapa*)

### Rutabaga (*Brassica napus*)

Family: Brassicaceae (Mustard)

Hardiness: Hardy

Ease of growing: Easy

Nutrient needs: Medium

Water needs: Medium

Common propagation: Seed

### Seed facts

Germination temperatures: 40°F to 105°F

Germination time: 6 to 10 days

Viability: 3 years

Direct sow: April to July

### Planning facts

Spacing: 1" for small turnip; 2" for large

Plants per square foot: 9

Time to harvest: 30 to 50 days (turnips); 85 to 100 days (rutabaga)

### General

The ancient Greeks valued turnips so much that they made small lead replicas of them. Turnips were also traditionally used as vegetable lanterns in fall harvest festivals in the British Isles, before being supplanted by the pumpkin.

Gardeners grow turnips and rutabagas for their tasty roots, which you can serve steamed or baked. Turnip leaves can also be eaten raw or used as potherbs. Turnip greens are packed with nutrients, particularly vitamins A1, B2, C and E. They are also a good source of minerals.

### Variety selection

Turnip is classified by its round, flat or cylindrical roots. "Purple Top White Globe" is a good standard turnip variety. "Hakurei" is a smooth white turnip with hairless leaves that has delicious tops and roots when harvested at about 2 inches diameter.

### Preparation and planting

Turnips and rutabagas perform well in Michigan because of its cool spring and fall weather. Both do best with a pH of 6.4 or above and abundant potash and phosphorus. You can sow seeds as soon as the soil warms to 40°F. For turnips, successive plantings at three week intervals will ensure a continuous crop. Due to its longer growing season, rutabaga is generally only sown once, and usually planted in mid-June to mid-July for fall harvest.

### Major pests

**Insects:** Flea beetles, aphids, root maggots.

**Diseases:** Black leg, black rot, turnip mosaic virus.

### Harvesting and storage

Harvest turnips when the roots are 2 to 4 inches in diameter, depending on variety. The flavor of the roots quickly deteriorates in hot weather, so timely harvest of a summer maturing crop is important. Fall crops may be mulched and left in the garden. Once harvested, turnips with greens will last two weeks if stored at 32°F and high humidity. Rutabagas can last up to six months.

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