

Renee's Garden

HORSERADISH PLANTING AND USE GUIDE

HORSERADISH (*Amoracia rusticana*) is a very widely adopted and cold-tolerant hardy perennial plant and produces well in USDA zones 3 through 9. When planted in early spring, the roots can be harvested in late fall, through the first autumn frosts. Once peeled and finely ground or shredded, homegrown prepared horseradish keeps well and adds a wonderful punch to everyday dishes along with many beneficial antioxidant compounds and minerals.

When You Receive Your Horseradish Roots

When roots arrive, plan to plant them just as soon as the ground can be worked in early spring. If you need to store them for short time, wrap them in slightly damp sphagnum moss or damp newspapers and store them in the refrigerator. Keep damp with good air circulation until you can plant them.

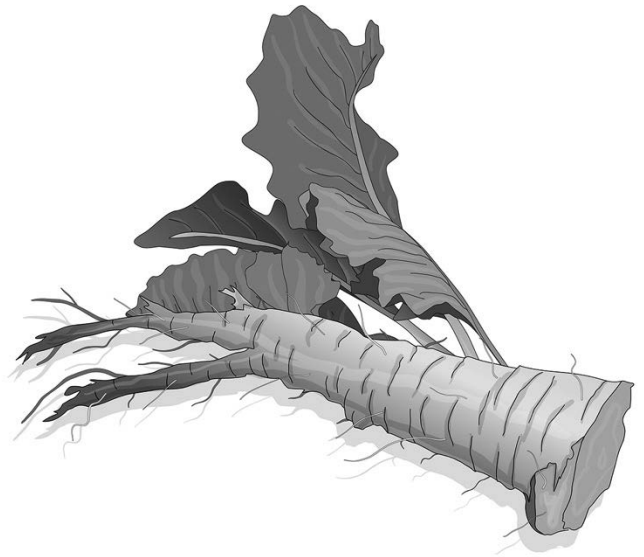
Where and When to Plant

Horseradish grows easily and well if you heed its preference for deep, well-draining fertile soil with a good supply of organic matter. Plants prefer full sun, but can take some light shade in the afternoon if necessary. Plant as soon as soil can be worked in spring.

Note: Horseradish roots are notorious spreaders, so plant in an isolated area, or at the very end of a garden bed. To really contain the plants, sink a big pot, (at least 12 inches tall and 16 to 18 inches in diameter) with its bottom cut out into the ground. Fill the pot with well-drained rich soil, and plant your horseradish roots into it.

How to Plant

To supply its needs, thoroughly loosen and work the soil where you're going to plant horseradish to a depth of 12 inches and mix in several shovelfuls of good compost or well-aged organic matter (but don't use fresh manure which causes forked roots).



Plant roots 2 feet apart. Set each one at a 45-degree angle, flat end up, with the top 2 inches below the soil line. Back fill the planting holes and mound more soil over them which will allow easier harvesting in the fall. Keep evenly moist while plants become established.

Care

For best yields, plants should be well watered throughout the summer, especially during the hot periods of midsummer. Mulching is a good strategy to maintain soil moisture. Keep well weeded when young; once established, horseradish plants will usually out-compete most weeds. Foliage can reach 2 to 3 feet tall over the course of the first season. If plants produce sprays of white flowers, remove them to redirect energy to the roots and avoid unwanted seeding.

Harvesting and Storage

Horseradish grows and develops its roots in early fall; cool soil improves root quality and flavor, so wait to harvest until tops have died back in late fall; after first frost is ideal. If in a mild climate, wait until the winter holidays to dig and enjoy. Overwintered plants can also be harvested in early spring before the plants leaf out, but roots will have stronger pungency and can be a little woody.

It's best to dig, divide and replant horseradish every 2-3 seasons to prevent the plants from becoming woody and to control the plants from multiplying and spreading.

To harvest, use a spading fork or shovel and carefully dig up the entire root mass. Harvest roots at least as thick as your finger. Replant a few of the smaller roots for another crop next season. Trim the tops off the harvested roots, rinse off soil, then carefully pat dry and store in the refrigerator in a sealed plastic bag. Unpeeled horseradish will keep in the fridge for several weeks. For long-term keeping, store roots in damp sand or damp sawdust in a cool dark place.

Using Your Horseradish Roots

First you process your roots into Prepared Horseradish which is used by itself or combined with other ingredients to make various kinds of sauces, drinks and condiments:

A Bloody Mary drink made with prepared horseradish is both sinus-clearing and delicious. Adding prepared horseradish to mayonnaise or fresh whole yogurt makes a delicious creamy spread to slather on hot sandwiches. Add ketchup to prepared horseradish and you'll have the very best fresh spicy seafood sauce. Add mustard for a delicious all-purpose condiment for roasted vegetables, sausages and cold cuts. Add sour cream to prepared horseradish and mix into potato salad or use as a perfect condiment for roast beef or lamb.

To make a basic simple Prepared Horseradish, assemble the basic vinegar solution*, then grate or shave your horseradish root into tiny shreds with a box grater, microplane grater or use a food processor (which is faster but doesn't produce a uniform consistency) and mix with the vinegar solution.

Be sure to wear protective eyewear and open doors/windows as the grating process releases strong fumes that can definitely make your eyes tear and sting! (Another alternative is to grate the horseradish outdoors).

Preparation Tips:

- If you shave or grate little mounds of horseradish manually, add it immediately to a basic vinegar solution* (see below) which stops the release of the pungent fumes, stabilizes the flavor and helps preserve it.
- If using a processor or blender to grate small chunks of horseradish root, add the basic vinegar solution* when processing to reduce fumes and stabilize flavor. Be sure to avert your head when opening the processor or blender cover.

Combining freshly grated horseradish with the basic vinegar solution* makes it into Prepared Horseradish which you can keep tightly sealed for 4-6 weeks in the refrigerator (but you will probably use it up before then!). Add different ingredients to the basic Prepared Horseradish (such as sour cream, whole yogurt, mayonnaise, mustard, etc.) to make various kinds of Horseradish Sauce to enjoy at the table. If using prepared horseradish or horseradish sauce in a cooked dish, add just before serving, as heat destroys the flavor and tang of fresh horseradish.

***Basic vinegar solution for making Prepared Horseradish:**

In a glass jar, stir together: 3 tablespoons white vinegar, 2 tablespoons water, and one teaspoon sugar and ½ teaspoon salt. Combine with or add to freshly grated horseradish right away to stabilize flavor.