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Growing Horseradish

Horseradish is a popular garden plant known for its hot, tangy flavor. This plant is a member of the mustard family and grows well in a soil high in organic matter and on the moist side.

In the garden, horseradish is a perennial that is used as an annual. The plant is started from root cuttings in the spring and forms long, deep roots that are harvested in the fall.

The reason for this is that the roots of horseradish grow fastest during late summer and early autumn. Wait until October or early November to dig up the roots. In harvesting, cut the tops as near to the ground as possible, three or four days before removal of the roots.

Next, dig a trench 12-24 inches deep along one side of the row. Working from the opposite side of the row with a shovel or spading fork, dig the roots. The bottom of mature roots can be cut off and saved for next year's planting. Keep these saved roots in a cool cellar over winter and plant next spring 3-5 inches below the soil surface in a slanting position.

There are many uses for horseradish in a culinary sense. The most common way of preparing it for table use is by scraping the roots of all defects, then grating it. Refrigerate at all times to preserve the pungent flavor. You can also put the grafted root in distilled vinegar or white wine vinegar (avoid using cider vinegar as it causes discoloration). Horseradish may also be dried, ground to powder, and bottled. This method of preservation does not retain the quality; however, it will store much longer than when grated fresh.

