

Radish, daikon

Raphanus sativus

Long white daikon radishes can be eaten fresh like globe radishes. They can also be stir-fried, pickled, and cooked in soups and stews—and the greens are tasty as well. In fact, daikons are a diet staple in Korea, Japan, and other Asian countries. They take about twice as long to mature as the familiar red rounds, and their taste is mild by comparison.

TIP – Daikon radishes can snap off easily when you try to harvest them, especially if you've let them grow longer than 12 inches. Loosen the surrounding soil with a fork before pulling them.

Location and soil Because they take a longer time to mature, daikons are more particular about soil than smaller radishes. Plant in full sun, loosen the soil to a depth of 8 inches or more, and amend with compost before sowing seed.

When to Plant Daikon is known as a winter radish, and is best when allowed to mature in cool weather. Sow seeds in late summer in cold-winter areas, or in fall where winters are mild.

Seed depth and Spacing Sprinkle the seeds sparingly in rows that are 8-12 inches apart. Place seeds 2-3 inches apart, and cover with ½ inch of soil.

Germination Seeds can germinate in soils as cold as 40°F but it may take up to 4 weeks, leaving seeds vulnerable to fungal and insect damage. When soil temperatures are between 60° and 85°F seedlings emerge in 3 to 6 days.

Thinning Thin seedlings to 5-6 inches apart when they get their first set of true leaves, and use the thinned seedlings in salads.

Care If flea beetles are a problem in your area, protect seedlings with row cover until they become established. Water regularly to encourage steady growth. Apply a heavy mulch of straw when the weather turns cold to protect radish tops, which jut up above the soil, from being damaged by frost.

Fertilize Amend the planting bed with compost, and add a slow-release fertilizer at the time of planting.

Harvest Daikon roots can grow to be immense. Harvest them beginning when they are 8 inches in length, and continue harvesting as needed through the fall. Despite being called winter radishes, the roots will rot in prolonged sub-freezing weather.

Nutrition Good source of Vitamin C.



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Heirloom variety: Minowase

This Japanese daikon can grow to an impressive 24 inches in length and 3 inches in width. It has a tender texture and a mild taste that's excellent in Oriental dishes. The roots are ready to harvest in about 50 days and can be grown in spring or fall, however, many gardeners swear that their root vegetables are tastier after a frost. It is a fact that higher temperatures increase a plant's respiration rate, which reduces the sugar content.