



GROWING TURNIPS

Turnips are easy to grow, quick to mature, store well and are a versatile ingredient in the kitchen. Even the green tops are edible and one of the most commonly used vegetables in southern Italian cooking. Turnips are great for growing in-between slow-growing crops and catch-cropping between harvests.

Seed Sowing

Direct sow from February under protection, or in mid-March - May outdoors. Maincrop turnips can be sown from mid-July to late August.

Plant seeds in drills around 30 cm apart, sow seeds every 15 cm. Seeds should germinate fast in warm weather. Sow into well-draining soil that isn't too compacted.

Transplanting

Sow in modules, one seed per cell. Transplant into their final growing position 30x15cm apart after 3-4 weeks.

Plant Care

Turnips are fast growing with low nutrient requirements. Keep them weed-free and watered during hot spells; lack of water can make them bolt and go woody. Too much water is also best avoided as it can cause the roots to split. You can mulch around the plants to keep in moisture and prevent weeds.

Use insect mesh or fleece to protect from flea beetles and root fly.

Challenges

Protect from slugs and snails, as they like direct-sown seeds. Avoid watering in the evening, as this will encourage overnight slugs and snails. Encourage predators like ground beetles, lizards, slow worms, and, if you're lucky enough, hedgehogs into your growing space by creating suitable wildlife habitat.

Harvest

From seed, they take around 40 days to fully grow, but younger plants can be harvested to thin out the rows. Harvest like any other root crop, by pulling gently on the leaves and top of the root. Larger turnips may need wiggling slightly to loosen them from the soil.

It's best to store turnips in the ground and harvest as and when you wish to cook them. Make sure to harvest the remaining crop before nights get too cold and frost is expected. They will store well in a cool, dry place such as a root cellar. Make sure to remove the leaves and brush off any soil before doing so.

Culinary Ideas

Turnips are a truly versatile root, we love it raw grated into salads or coleslaws or cooked in soups and stir fries.

Seed Saving

If growing for seed, sow later in the season from mid-July to late August and treat as a biennial. You will need to select your best turnips and store them in sand over winter to prevent it from being eaten by pests, then plant it out in the spring. Crops will have to be isolated before flowering to prevent cross-pollination with other *brassica rapa* crops like chinese cabbage and broccoli raab. The seeds form in pods; when they turn crisp and brown, they will rattle. That's the best time to harvest and store in a cool, dry place for up to 3 years.