



## Ventura County Garden to Table Series – Root Vegetables

Because “root vegetable” is a culinary category rather than a botanical one, it includes not only true roots but also bulbs, corms, rhizomes, tubers, and other underground plant structures. Below we will talk about true roots. However, be sure to check out the General Vegetable Gardening Tip for additional information.

### Where to Plant

1. Shade Tolerance - roots can grow in partial shade, but may develop more slowly or produce smaller yields.
2. Seasonal Changes – consider how shadow patterns change with the seasons and affect the amount of sunlight.
3. Garden Planning - consider placing taller plants on the north side to prevent them from shadowing shorter crops.
4. Container Gardening - if your garden lacks sufficient sunlight, consider using movable containers to follow the sun.

### Information on Specific Root Vegetables

1. **Radishes** - are quick-growing, cool-season crops that thrive in our Mediterranean climate. Here are some excellent radish varieties to consider for your garden:
  - Spring/Fall Radishes (Fast-maturing, 20-30 days) sow seeds February - April, & August - October - Cherry Belle, French Breakfast, Easter Egg, and White Icicle
  - Summer Radishes (Heat-tolerant, 30-40 days) sow seeds April - August - White Munich, Zlata, Red Meat (Watermelon)
  - Winter Radishes (Slow-growing, 50-60 days) – sow seeds August - October - Black Spanish Round, Daikon, China Rose
2. **Carrots** - Our Mediterranean climate is ideal for growing carrots. Here are some carrot varieties to consider:
  - Early Season Carrots - sow seeds March – June, mature in 60 – 75 days - Nantes (sweet and crisp), and Chantenay (good for heavy or rocky soils)
  - Mid-Season Carrots - sow seeds May – August, mature in 75 days - Imperator (excellent flavor), and Danvers (high yields)
  - Late Season Carrots – sow seeds July – October, mature in 80 – 85 days - Mokum (exceptional sweetness) and Autumn King (stores well)
  - Additional Varieties mature in 70 – 80 days - Yellowstone (mild sweet flavor), Cosmic Purple (orange flesh), and Rainbow (mix of colorful carrots)
3. **Beets** - cool-season crop, grow year rounds in Ventura – but best sowing seeds October - May. Planting to harvest generally takes 50 to 75 days depending on the variety. They can be harvested when they reach about 1.5 to 3 inches in diameter.
  - Varieties to consider - Detroit Dark Red (classic - deep red color and sweet flavor), Chioggia (heirloom variety with distinctive red and white concentric circles when sliced) Golden (yellow variety and has a milder flavor), and Bull's Blood (grown primarily for its deep red leaves, but also produces edible roots)
4. **Turnips** - Our climate is ideal conditions for growing turnips. Here are some varieties to consider:
  - Early Season Turnips - sow seeds March-May, mature in 40 - 45 days, - Tokyo Cross (fast-maturing, sweet, tender flesh), Purple Top Milan (distinctive purple shoulders)
  - Mid-Season Turnips – sow seeds May-July, mature in 50 – 55 days - Hakurei (Japanese turnip w/ mild, delicate flavor), Scarlet Queen Red Stems (bright purple-red skin)



- Late Season Turnips – sow seeds July-October, mature 65 days - Just Right (large, stores exceptionally well), American Purple Top (classic, dependable turnip)
5. **Parsnips** - Our climate is ideal conditions for growing parsnips. Here are some varieties to consider:
- Early Season Parsnips – sow seeds February – May, mature in 90 - 100 days - Hollow Crown (classic variety w/ sweet, nutty flavor), Harris Model (uniformly shaped, tender roots)
  - Mid-Season Parsnips – sow seeds April – July, mature in 100 - 110 days - Javelin (high yielding), and Gladiator (thick, sturdy roots and excellent storage quality)
  - Late Season Parsnips – sow seeds June – October, mature in 120 - 130 days - Albion (large variety with almost a spicy flavor), Palace (late-maturing w/ a sweet, distinctive taste)
6. **Rutabagas** - is a cool-season crop. Sow seeds October – February, planting to harvest generally takes 90 to 100 days depending on the variety. They are heat tolerant and disease resistant. Here are some rutabaga varieties to consider:
- American Purple Top (widely adaptable and popular variety), Laurentian (known for its sweetness and good storage qualities), Joan (newer variety with improved uniformity and disease resistance), Marian (good disease resistance), and Helenor (round roots and good flavor)

**Basic Care:** QR code will take you to the Soil to Sprouts slide deck on the Ventura County Master Gardener website

- **Seeds or Transplant** – Transplants produce earlier harvest and often have multiple plants in each container - separate by soaking.
- **Mulch the Soil Surface** – Apply a 3-4-inch layer of organic mulch.
- **Watering** – water deep - overhead watering can lead to diseases.
- **Support (indeterminate)** - trellis, stake, or cage.
- **Fertilizer** – Use a General Purpose (10-10-10) fertilizer. High nitrogen fertilizer will increase green growth – not fruit.
- **Using Raised Beds or Containers?** – use potting soil or blend of compost/topsoil/vermiculite.



### When to Harvest

#### 1. Signs of Maturity

- A. Days to Maturity: Check the seed packet for the estimated days to maturity, which provides a good baseline for when to expect your vegetables to be ready for harvest.
- B. Size and Appearance: Root vegetables should be harvested when they reach a desirable size.
- C. Plant Indicators: Observe the plant's foliage; for many root vegetables, such as carrots and beets, the tops will begin to yellow or die back when they are ready to be harvested.

#### 2. Optimal Harvesting Conditions

- A. Timing: The best time to harvest is early in the morning when temperatures are cooler.
- B. Soil Conditions: Ensure that the soil is moist but not overly wet.

Learn more about the Ventura County Master Gardener using this QR to visit the website.

