

How to Grow Daikon Radish

Daikon radish is commonly eaten simmered, stir fried, grated, pickled or baked. Its leaves are also edible and can be used in recipes that call for turnip greens, and its seeds make excellent sprouts for use on salads or in sandwiches.

Here in the United States, daikon radishes are grown primarily in California and Texas and are most often sold in Asian specialty markets. However, they can be grown just about anywhere, including in your organic vegetable garden, wherever it may be. It can be sown in spring for a summer harvest or in fall for a winter harvest.

Growing daikon radishes is very similar to growing any other type of radish. Daikon radishes take longer to mature than salad radishes, approximately 60 days, vs. 30. They also grow much, much bigger and, accordingly, they need lots of space.

Daikons should be sown in rows 18" apart and thinned to a spacing of 6" in the rows to give them the space that they need. They can get absolutely huge if you let them, but they are normally harvested when they are about as big as a typical carrot.

Daikons can be grown organically without too much trouble. Be ready for attacks by flea beetles, cabbage root maggots and any other insect pests that tend to trouble your radishes. Floating row cover, which is a lightweight, permeable, spun-polypropylene blanket that you put over your plants, can help protect your daikon radishes from these pests.

Once your daikons are ready to harvest, dig them up with care; they are brittle. If you aren't going to eat them right away, you should wash them, cut their leaves off and store them in your refrigerator, where they will keep well for between one to two months.

Daikon radishes are great fun to cook with because they will open your eyes to a whole different type of cuisine. Growing them in your organic garden will enable you to have the freshest, most delicious radishes to use. This is a necessity because many daikon recipes can only be made successfully with fresh radishes--not the ones wilting in the ethnic section of your local supermarket. If you want to explore the flavors of Asia but can't make it to Tokyo or Seoul just now, grow yourself some daikon radishes.