

How to Grow Rutabagas



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Here are some planting instructions for rutabagas:

Timing: Rutabagas are cool-season crops that prefer cool temperatures between 50°F and 65°F (10°C to 18°C). The best time to plant them is in early spring or late summer to early fall, about 6 to 10 weeks before the first expected frost.

Site Selection: Rutabagas grow best in full sun but can tolerate partial shade. They also prefer well-drained, fertile soil with a pH between 6.0 and 6.8. If your soil is heavy or clay-like, amend it with compost or other organic matter to improve drainage.

Planting: Rutabagas are typically grown from seeds. Plant the seeds about 1/2 inch deep, and 1 inch apart in rows spaced 12 to 18 inches apart. You can also plant them in hills or mounds, with several seeds planted together in each mound, 12 to 18 inches apart.

Watering: Keep the soil evenly moist but not waterlogged. Rutabagas require about 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week. Water deeply once or twice a week, depending on rainfall and soil moisture levels.

Fertilizing: Rutabagas require regular fertilization to ensure healthy growth. Apply a balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) before planting, and then side-dress with the same fertilizer every 3 to 4 weeks during the growing season.

Thin the seedlings: Once they have grown a few inches tall, thin them to about 4 to 6 inches apart. This allows enough space for the roots to grow properly.

Mulching: Mulching can help keep the soil cool, retain moisture, and suppress weeds. Apply a layer of organic mulch (such as straw or leaves) around the plants, being careful not to cover the base of the plant.

Pests and Diseases: Rutabagas can be susceptible to flea beetles, root maggots, and cabbage worms. Cover the plants with row covers or apply insecticidal soap to prevent these pests. Diseases such as clubroot and powdery mildew can also affect rutabagas. To prevent these diseases, practice crop rotation and avoid planting rutabagas in the soil where other brassica crops have recently grown.

Harvesting: Rutabagas are ready to harvest about 90 to 120 days after planting when the roots are about 3 to 5 inches in diameter. You can harvest them by gently pulling them out of the soil, being careful not to damage the roots. After harvesting, cut off the tops and store the rutabagas in a cool, dry place for up to several months.

By following these planting instructions, you should be able to grow healthy and productive rutabaga plants in your garden. Good luck!