



**CORNELL  
COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION OF  
ONEIDA COUNTY**

# HOME GROWN FACTS

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## GROWING RUTABAGAS



Easy-to-grow softball-sized root crop is a favorite for fall and winter soups and dishes, and can also be used raw in salads. Rutabagas are often confused with turnips, but are sweeter flavored.

### Site Characteristics

#### Sunlight:

- full sun
- part shade

#### Soil conditions:

- requires well-drained soil
- tolerates low fertility

Performs well on wide range of soils. Unlike most brassicas, does not require rich soils. High organic matter and/or nitrogen levels may cause poorly shaped roots. Loosen soil deeply or grow in raised beds to encourage good root development. Sensitive to boron deficiency.

### Plant Traits

#### Lifecycle: annual

Biennial grown as an annual.

#### Ease-of-care: easy

#### Foliage color: medium green

Often a waxy blue-green

#### Foliage texture: medium

#### Shape: cushion, mound or clump

#### Tolerates:

- Frost

### Growing Information

#### How to plant:

Propagate by seed

Germination temperature: 45 F to 85 F - Will germinate at soil temperatures as low as 40 F. 60 F is optimum.

Days to emergence: 4 to 7

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### Maintenance and care:

Plant seed 2 inches apart and ½ inch deep in rows 18 to 24 inches apart in early to mid-summer, about 3 months before expected harvest for most varieties. Thin to 6-inch spacings. Frost improves quality and flavor.

For early crops, sow seed as soon as you can work the soil in spring. Do not wait until fall to harvest as roots will become woody and fibrous.

Larger seeds germinate faster and may be ready for harvest as much as 5 to 6 weeks sooner than smaller seed.

To help reduce disease, do not plant rutabagas or other cole crops in the same location more than once every three or four years.

Use floating row covers to protect crop from early pests.

Sustained mean temperatures above 80 F can cause excessively fast growth and root cracking.

### Pests:

Flea beetles - Use row covers to help protect plants from early damage. Put in place at planting and remove before temperatures get too hot (midsummer). Control weeds.

Cabbage root maggots - Use row covers.

### Diseases:

Black leg

Black rot

Turnip mosaic virus

### Varieties

Choose varieties based on flesh color (yellow to white), shoulder color (green, purple), root size and shape, storability, flavor and texture. Most are ready for harvest in 90 to 100 days. Some are resistant to clubroot.

### Some varieties recommended for New York include:

American Purple Top

Thomson Laurentian

Source: <http://explore.cornell.edu> 2006

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