

# Organic Turnips and Rutabegas:

## Growing and Seed Saving Information



### Types of Turnips and Rutabegas

Turnips and Rutabegas (*Brassica rapa* and *Brassica napus*) are cool season biennials in the *Brassicaiceae* family, which includes broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, kohlrabi, turnips, mustards, watercress and horseradish.

### Soil and Nutrient Requirements

Turnips and Rutabegas can tolerate slightly alkaline soil, preferring the range 6.0 -7.5. Deep, loose, well drained fertile soil with moderate nitrogen levels is best.

### Position

Full sun, or part shade

### Seeding Depth

Planting instructions are from direct seeding. Planting depth: 3/4";

### Plant Spacing

Seed spacing: for turnip 8 sds/ft, for rutabaga 6 sds/ft; Plant spacing: for turnip 2-4" , for rutabaga 6";

### Row Spacing

Row spacing: for turnip 12-18, for rutabaga 18-24".

### When to Sow

Turnips can be grown all season long but perform best in cool fall conditions. Rutabagas are sown in the summer for fall harvests. Seeds will germinate from 45-85 degrees.

### Frost Tolerant

Yes

### Drought Tolerant

No. Turnips need plentiful, consistent moisture.

### Heat Tolerant

No

### Seed Specs

Turnips- 11M sds/oz avg, 175M sds/lb avg. Rutabagas- 11M sds/oz avg, 175M sds/lb avg. M=1,000

### Seeding Rate

Turnips- ~1900 sds/100' double row, ~255M sds/acre seeding 8sds/ft, for a final 4" avg plant spacing, 18" row spacing. Rutabagas- ~1400 sds/100' double row seeding 6sds/ft, for a final 6" avg plant spacing, 24" row spacing.

### Harvest

Flavor is sweetest when harvested just before the ground freezes or at least after two hard frosts. Turnip tops can be eaten as greens.

### Storage

Unwashed roots can store for several weeks at 32°F at a high relative humidity as close to 95% as possible. With good air circulation, topped roots can be stored four to five months.

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### Pest Info

- Cabbage looper, imported cabbage worm, and diamondback moth, are of the Lepidoptera order and can be controlled by *Bacillus thuringiensis* (such as Dipel DF) and/or spinosad, preferentially in rotation with one another to prevent selection of resistant individuals.
- Cabbage root maggots feed on roots, resulting in stunting and wilting of plants. Use floating row cover to protect young plants. There are also beneficial nematodes available.
- Flea beetles make small holes in the leaves and are most damaging to growth when plants are young. . Floating row cover may be used to ward them off.

### Disease Info

- Black rot, caused by the bacteria *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *campestris*, is one of the most destructive diseases of all crucifer crops. Symptoms first appear as V-shaped yellow lesions at the leaf margin, after which the veins of infected leaves, stems, and roots turn black. Infected plants should be pulled up as soon as noticed, and plantings should never be worked during wet conditions.

### Seed Saving Instructions

Insect pollinated biennial. Different varieties must be separated by 1/4 mile. This distance can be lessened if there are barriers such as woods or buildings. Store turnips or rutabagas over the winter in a cold area with high humidity or leave outside in areas with mild winters. In the spring, transplant the entire root to its original depth, 8"-12" apart in rows 18"-36" apart. They will grow in height and then flower. Staking may be required. Seeds are mature when pods are dry. Harvest individual pods or entire stalks. Harvest into bags as seed can be lost due to shattering. Or harvest onto a tarp in the morning when plants are still wet with dew. Use a 1/8" screen to help with cleaning.