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It Is Time to Harvest Horseradish

If you grow horseradish in your garden, you can begin harvesting the fruits of your labor. Most of its growth happens from the end of summer into early fall, so you do not want to harvest too early. Wait until the leaves have died back, indicating that it is dormant for the season. Ideally, harvest should be delayed until just before the ground freezes, usually November to December.

If you do not feel like harvesting just yet, you can wait until spring. Although commonly grown as an annual, horseradish is a perennial and can survive in the ground year to year. If you decide to wait until springtime, apply a thick layer of mulch to protect the roots over the winter. You can harvest in the spring as soon as the ground thaws and becomes workable, ideally before it leaves dormancy. To harvest horseradish, begin by digging a trench alongside the row of plants exposing the roots. Use a shovel or pull the plants by hand toward the trench, releasing the roots from the soil. Remove the foliage to about one inch above the crown. Remove smaller, side roots and collect the larger roots for storage.

Smaller roots can be cut into six- to eight-inch-long sections and planted now for next year's crop. Horseradish can easily spread throughout the garden if not contained so harvesting each year is important.

Thoroughly wash and dry the roots before storing them in plastic bags in the refrigerator. When preparing horseradish, peel the roots and cut it into sections. Blend the root pieces along with a little water and a couple of ice cubes. When blended, horseradish releases oils with strong fumes that can be an irritant. This is what gives horseradish the strong flavor but use caution when opening the blender to avoid getting it into your eyes. Incorporating vinegar stops this reaction.

If vinegar is added immediately after blending, the horseradish will be mild. So, you can wait a few minutes to add the vinegar if you want a stronger flavor. Two to three tablespoons vinegar per cup of horseradish is sufficient. One-half teaspoon of salt can also be added for flavor.