

Growing Rutabagas

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We have not planted rutabagas for many years, but we decided to give them a try this year. For some reason, this is a vegetable that we enjoy eating when we prepare it, but it does not seem to come to mind when we normally plant a garden or when we are shopping at the grocery store. We had great success this year planting, growing, cooking and eating our rutabagas.



Rows of seedlings becoming established

We planted a lot of short 4 foot, drip irrigated, rows of many different varieties of vegetables. It is amazing how much can be produced in a four foot row. Nearly all these short rows were planted with seed. Once the seed germinated and started to grow, we thinned the plants to allow the recommended amount of space between plants. In the case of our rutabagas, we probably grew them a little too close, but we still harvested all the rutabagas we needed. We planted two rows of rutabagas. We tried to transplant some rutabaga seedlings, but the planted rows grew much better than the transplants.



Short rows of seedlings growing

We fertilized the rutabagas about every 30 days with Miracle-Gro® liquid fertilizer through the irrigation system. Rutabagas grow fast and need nutrients in order to grow at their full potential. Rutabagas grow similarly to purple top white globe turnips but it takes longer for the rutabaga bulb to develop. The flesh of the rutabaga bulb has a yellowish color and has a firmer texture and a mildly sweet flavor.



Rutabagas before thinning

It is important to thin seedlings to the recommended spacing recommended on the seed packet. This spacing allows room for more efficient air flow which reduces the possibility of disease, nutrient uptake by the plant roots, and availability of sunlight. We purchased small packets of inexpensive seed for our short rows of vegetables. We found the rutabagas to

have a high germination percentage, rapid germination, and a high survival rate among the seedlings. The rutabagas were very efficient at competing with many of the weeds that tried to germinate near the seedlings.



Rutabagas after thinning

We harvested our rutabagas when the bulbs were about 3 inches in diameter, however these bulbs can grow much larger. Our bulbs were on the small size due to being planted too close together. The bulbs we harvested were healthy, cooked well and tasted great!! We would suggest dedicating a small area to grow some rutabagas and see if you can gain a taste for this under appreciated vegetable.



Medium size rutabagas