HOW TO GROW RADISHES IN A SCHOOL GARDEN

Radishes are a great addition to any school garden. They are easy to grow, sprout and grow very quickly, and don’t take up much room. Many types of radishes are ready to be harvested just 23 to 28 days after planting! Seed packets always tell you what you need to know to grow, but here are some tips for growing radishes in your school garden.

When to Grow
Radishes are a cool weather crop that can be planted in Georgia in early fall or early spring. Plant in the spring between mid-February and mid-May, and plant in the fall between mid-August and mid-October. Radishes produce the best when the temperature is between 50° and 65°F. Warm temperatures can cause the plant to create a seed stalk before developing the root. You can plant a new row of radishes every 8-10 days to have a continual supply.

Where to Grow
Radishes grow very well in the ground, in raised beds, or even in containers. Radishes need the soil to be moist, but not soggy, so it should drain well. The plants should get about 4 hours of sun daily. Radishes grow well in full sun when the weather is cool, but in warmer weather they do better in partial shade.

Planting
Radish seeds should be planted directly into the ground. They do not transplant well, so do not start them inside in seed trays. Prepare the soil by breaking up any large soil clods, removing sticks and stones, and smoothing the planting area.

Radish seeds are very small, so they should not be buried very deep. Generally, the smaller the seed, the closer to the surface it should be planted. Make a small trench about 1/4 inch deep using your hand, a tool, or a stick. Sprinkle the seeds into the trench, dropping one seed every half inch, or so. Lightly cover the seeds with soil. Water the seeds and keep the plants moist throughout the growing season.

For more information, visit georgiaorganics.org/for-schools/grow-radish-grow. For questions, contact us at 678-702-0400 or emily@georgiaorganics.org.
**Plant Care**

The growth of radish plants focuses first on the leaves, then the root, then the seeds. After the leaves are developed and photosynthesizing, the plant begins storing carbohydrates in its root, causing it to create a round, edible ball. Once creation of the root is complete, or when the weather gets too hot, radish plants focus their energy on creating seeds on a tall stalk.

Radishes must be grown with an adequate moisture supply. Radishes grown without enough water can become tough, pithy, and spicier than normal, especially if the weather is also hot. The soil should stay moist, but not waterlogged. The root of radishes can rot if they are growing in soil that is too wet. A good test to see whether the soil is moist enough is to pick up a handful of soil, squeeze it, and see if it clumps together. If the soil is so dry it falls apart immediately, it needs to be watered. If more than a trickle of water runs out between your fingers, it needs to dry out before watering again.

If the weather gets too warm (especially in late spring), mature radish plants start to “bolt,” or go to seed. This means the root and leaves stop growing and the plants start producing seeds on a tall stalk. Wait to plant until hot days are infrequent, water regularly, and create shade using a cloth, tarp, trellis, or other plants to protect radishes from the heat.

Keep the area around plants weeded to keep weeds from competing with young radish sprouts.

**Harvesting**

The best ways to know when radishes are ready to harvest are to count the number of days since planting, and to evaluate their size.

Since radishes are so quick-growing, harvesting after the indicated number of “days to maturity” written on a seed packet is generally a good way to know when radishes are ready.

Typical salad or garden radishes (varieties such as Cherry Belle, Cherriette, Champion, and White Icicle) are ready to harvest when the root is about two inches in diameter. (Icicle radishes will be elongated, but still two inches in diameter.)

If a radish plant grows too long, it starts to “bolt” or go to seed. The plant stops sending energy to the root and leaves, and sends up a long stalk, producing seed pods at the top. Once the plant goes to seed, the root will taste bitter and pithy. Harvest radishes before they go to seed!