

Raphanus sativus

[Synonyms : *Raphanus radicola*, *Raphanus raphanistrum* subsp. *sativus*, *Raphanus sativus* var. *hortensis*, *Raphanus sativus* var. *radicola*, *Raphanus sativus* var. *sativus*]

GARDEN RADISH is a hybrid annual to perennial. Probably from China it has violet-veined, white or lilac (rarely yellow) flowers.

It is also known as *Ætíhreðka* (Icelandic), *Cải củ* (Vietnamese), Common radish, Cultivated radish, Daikon, *Fujl* (Arabic), European radish, French radish, *Garten-Rettich* (German), *Hatsuka daikon* (Japanese), *Haveraeddike* (Danish), *Hónapos retek* (Hungarian), *Hong luo bo zi* (Chinese), *Hung loh paak tsai* (Chinese - Cantonese), *Il mu* (Korean), *Kerti retek* (Hungarian), *Labanos* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Lobak* (Javanese, Malay), *Lobak berem* (Malay, Sundanese), *Luba* (Malay), *Månedreddik* (Norwegian), *Monatsrettich* (German), *Mula* (Bengali), *Mulaka* (Sanskrit), *Muli* (Hindi, Punjabi), *Mulla* (Bengali), *Mullangi* (Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu), *Mulo* (Gujarati), Oilseed radish, *Ou zhou luo bo* (Chinese), *Petit radis* (French), *Rabanete* (Portuguese), *Rabanetes escarlates* (Portuguese), *Rabanillo* (Spanish), *Rabanito* (Spanish), *Rabano* (Spanish), *Rabu* (Singhalese), *Radeisshu* (Japanese), *Rades* (Javanese), *Radí* (Vietnamese), *Radieschen* (German), *Radijs* (Dutch), *Radis* (Danish, French), *Rådisa* (Swedish), *Radis cultivé* (French), *Radis d'été* (French), *Radise* (Danish), Radish, *Radis rose* (French), *Raeddike* (Danish), *Ræfla* (Icelandic), *Rafano* (Italian), *Rafano kultiva* (Esperanto), *Ramenas* (Dutch), *Ramolaccio* (Italian), *Rättika* (Swedish), *Ravanell* (Maltese), *Ravanello* (Italian), *Ravanello comune* (Italian), *Reddik* (Norwegian), *Redis* (Estonian), *Red'kev* (Slovak), *Ředkev setá* (Czech), *Retikka* (Finnish), *Retissi* (Finnish), *Rettich* (German), *Rettig* (German), *Rhuddygl* (Welsh), *Ruokaretikka* (Finnish), *Rzodkiew* (Polish), Small radish, Small-rooted radish, Spring radish, Summer radish, *Tamme radys* (Dutch), *Tūr* (Kurdish), *Türp* (Turkish), *Vrtna redkev* (Slovak), and Wild radish; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of 'the coming of Spring'.

Warning – it would be desirable to avoid garden radish if experiencing stomach or intestinal disorders.

The non-poisonous roots of garden radish can be confused with those of the equally non-poisonous horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*), American sweet cicely (*Osmorhiza longistylis*), turnip (*Brassica rapa*), and parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), and also the poisonous roots of monk's-hood (*Aconitum napellus*), of beaver poison (*Cicuta maculata*), of fool's parsley (*Aethusa cynapium*), of hemlock water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*), of hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), of pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*), and of white bryony (*Bryonia dioica*).

Sativus means 'cultivated'.

The name Radish is thought to come either from a Sanskrit word *rudhira* (meaning 'blood') or from a Saxon word for 'ruddy' (*rude*, *rudo* or *reod*).

Apparently the plant has been cultivated and taken for granted for so long that it is not easy to identify its origins. Nevertheless it is likely that garden radish is a native of China where it has been grown for over 3000 years and is now cultivated in many varieties. In addition to the roots (which are often pickled, as well as eaten raw or boiled) the leaves and flowering tops can be eaten in salad. Some varieties are grown in parts of Asia for their

edible seed pods that can reach two feet in length, and in Japan some of the more conventional varieties (to the western European or North American eye) can reach 65 lb. in weight.

The ancient Egyptians are said to have eaten garden radishes in large quantities. On the other hand the ancient Greeks held the plant in such high esteem that some say a golden replica of it was cast for the Delphic temple, while that for the turnip (*Brassica rapa*) was made of lead and for the beetroot (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *vulgaris*) of silver – others contend that the radishes taken into the temple were placed on a special gold dish. The Roman people are believed to have used the garden radish as an appetiser before eating meat. They are also thought to have cultivated several varieties including the round radish and the common long radish. At the Jewish Feast of the Passover the garden radish was often and still can be eaten as a side dish.

The garden radish is said to have reached Britain in 1548 just before the Elizabethan period in England. Some authorities claim that it was believed to be bad both for the blood and the digestion, while others say that wealthy Western Europeans of the mid-late 16th Century followed the earlier Roman practice of serving garden radish as an appetiser ahead of meat.

The well-known English playwright and poet, William Shakespeare (1564-1616), refers to the garden radish in both Parts 1 and 2 of *Henry V* and in each instance Falstaff is speaking. In the former he declares

All? I know not what ye call all; but if I fought not with fifty of them, I am a bunch of radish:

while in the latter he describes Justice Shallow with the words

..... I do remember him at Clement's Inn, like a man made after supper of a cheese-paring; when he was naked, he was, for all the world, like a forked radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife;

It is believed that the black radish (normally used in homoeopathic remedies today) was probably developed during the Middle Ages in Spain.

At some point the plant reached North America and the Costanoan Indian tribe came to eat the raw stems.

There are records of herbalists recommending the plant for treating kidney stones and bladder disorders. And at one time a cure for warts and corns was considered certain if these were treated with garden radishes that had been harvested under a waning moon.