Parsnip—*Pastinaca sativa* L.\(^1\)

James M. Stephens\(^2\)

Parsnip is related to the carrot, which it resembles, at least in the root and habit of growth. Unlike the orange-colored roots of carrots, parsnip roots are creamy white on the exterior and white on the inside. Parsnips are reported to have originated in the Mediterranean area, where wild forms were used for food by the Romans. By the 16th century, parsnips were cultivated in Germany, England, and soon thereafter in the American colonies. American Indians learned to grow and store them for eating in the winter.

Start parsnips from seed in a manner similar to that for carrots. Normally, about 120 days are required from seeding to root harvest. Seed of this biennial are readily available. They are not long-lived in storage, as it is best to purchase new seed each season.

**Use**

Since parsnip roots tend to shrivel easily in storage, they are quite often heavily waxed when marketed in retail channels.