

DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

Underappreciated and unusually delicious root vegetables



Sioux Rogers

BY SIOUX ROGERS

The root vegetables mentioned below are but three of many underutilized and extremely nutritious garden plants that are easy to grow and very delicious.

Burdock

How would you like to have more than 23,000 family members and still be referred to as a weed? Yikes! That's the case with the Daisy family (also known as Asteraceae or Compositae), of which burdock is an outstanding representative. Burdock is also known as gobo and by at least a dozen other names. Sadly, it is often referred to as a nasty thistle weed, too. If you have cultivated or wild burdock growing in your yard, you are very lucky. If you don't have it, plant it.

Here are a few precautions before planting. The plant can grow anywhere from six to eight feet tall. Since Burdock is thought to come from Japan, I believe when you plant it, it tries to go back to Japan. I once planted burdock and never did find the end after digging three feet. Burdock looks like a long, skinny, brown carrot. When cooked its texture

resembles a cooked carrot or parsnip, but it has an earthy, nutty flavor. It is crisp and crunchy when raw. Unlike a carrot, however, it is not so yummy when raw.

Burdock is noted for its exceptional medicinal qualities as well as its flavor. Medicinally it is said to have excellent blood purifying qualities, expelling toxins via the kidneys and liver. All parts of the plant can be used. The seeds have been used as an effusion for throat and chest ailments, and leaves and stems can be used as an appetite stimulant and remedy for indigestion. Burdock is very low in calories and contains inulins, which are polysaccharides that help regulate blood sugar. This plant is an excellent source of potassium and other minerals, as well as small quantities of folic acid, riboflavin, pyridoxine, niacin, and vitamins E and C (www.nutrition-and-you.com/burdock-root).

Celeriac

Also called turnip-rooted celery, knob celery, or celery root, celeriac is a variety of celery that is cultivated for its

edible roots, hypocotyl, and shoots. If you have never seen celeriac in the store, it is white-beige, not green like celery. It is not a smooth ball, but rather gnarly. It has a wonderful crunch and snap when eaten raw. It is actually easier to grow than celery in that most of the "work" is happening below ground, not above as with its celery cousin.

Celeriac, another underused, easy-to-grow vegetable, is said to be one of 11 excellent foods for arthritis (www.sharecare.com/health/bone-joint-muscle-health/health-guide/manage-joint-pain-arthritis/best-foods-joint-pain-8#slide-11). If you are practicing organic gardening and have healthy soil full of fat earthworms, your root vegetables like celeriac will be chock-full of minerals. Like celery, celeriac can be used raw and chopped up in salads. It can also be sliced, grated, and cooked as you would a potato.

Horseradish

The first rule about horseradish is plant it in a container! If you don't follow

this simple advice, you may become the next horseradish farmer on planet Applegate.

This underappreciated root is in the same Brassicaceae family as mustard, broccoli, and cabbage. The word "horse" most likely refers to its strength.

Horseradish is easily grown in any well-drained soil. A couple of old tires piled up works quite well and keeps the roots from going berserk around and about the garden. Because of its kinship to cabbage, horseradish attracts the same pests. Handpicking the small cabbage worms off the large leaves is the easiest way to control them.

The extremely pungent and distinctive odor of the horseradish is due to its phytochemicals. One of the best doctors I have ever known, Dr. J. David Walters, advised me to grate the horseradish and then take a very deep breath. Wow! If nothing else, short of falling on the floor, my sinuses were dramatically cleared. Horseradish is underused and underappreciated for its high antioxidant qualities and immune stimulating properties. It is also said to inhibit the mutation of healthy cells into cancerous cells (www.organicfacts.net/health-benefits/vegetable/horseradish/).

Take the time to look up more of the highly beneficial properties of these plants. If you have a garden, take care of yourself by growing the most nutritious plants you possibly can.

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Photo, left: Burdock (rosewoods.com/burdock). Center: Celeriac (theknobblyplate.co.uk/celeriac). Right: Horseradish (bakingwithzombies.com/2014/11/18/horseradish/).

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