



Newton Le Willows Gardeners' Association

Celeriac

Sowing

Sow in a good seed compost, filling the pot or tray and firm gently with a presser. Water the surface, using a fine rose on the can and allow to drain. Sprinkle seeds thinly onto the surface. do not crowd. Spread a very thin layer of fine compost over the seeds. Use either a heated propagator or wait for April and put them under a clear lid on the staging. When the seedlings appear, grow on under glass. Once the plants have established a firm root system, harden them off outside.

Planting

Prepare the planting bed the previous autumn by digging in plenty of organic matter. If the soil is poor add a general-purpose fertiliser too. Whilst an open, sunny site is ideal, if your soil is prone to drying out, light shade will help prevent drying out. Plants should be 38cm apart in all directions. They are planted with their crown proud of the soil.

Aftercare

Take precautions against slugs and snails, particularly whilst plants are small. Water when the ground is dry, if your soil is free-draining or you are in a dry area of the country, apply a 5cm mulch of well rotted compost or leafmould after rain or watering. Twice a year add a liquid feed, on poor soils apply weekly. Keep weeds out and remove any lower, damaged leaves.

Harvesting

Harvest in late autumn right through to spring. They will probably attain a maximum size of about 10cm across. It is rare to be able to match the size seen on greengrocery shelves.

Damage

Slugs and snails are attracted to the leaves and will completely defoliate the plants so plan to combat them. Celery leaf miner can be a problem. They strike just as young plants start to get away, causing a pale blistering in places on the leaves. You should pick off and burn these leaves but if this would severely defoliate the plant, just pick off the worst affected leaves and they generally do well.

Varieties

Brilliant (*Dobies*): Smooth, cream-white flesh, good nutty flavour.

Giant Prague (*Thomas Etty*): Heritage variety, rounded root with flattened base, good flavour.

Ibis (*Moreveg.co.uk*): A fast starter.

Monarch (*Mr. Fothergills*): Straightforward to grow, good flavour.

Prinz (*Organic Gardening Catalogue*): Best to get results with, compact with globular roots, smooth white flesh.

Robert Baynes