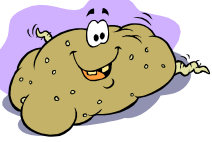


# Yacon Bolivian Sunroot

*Smallanthus sonchifolius*



**Yacon...."the best vegetable you've never eaten"**

Yacon, also called Bolivian Sunroot, is a tuber from South America with a crunchy texture. The flavor is described as a cross between apples, watermelon and very mild celery. Yacon means "Water Root" in Inca language.

It can be eaten raw or cooked and stays crunchy when cooked. Yacon will improve salads, soups, stirfrys, pasta sauces and is very good chopped fine in mashed potatoes.

Healthwise, diabetics can use Yacon because of its low to moderate glycemic index and eating Yacon tubers is purported to be good for relief from acid indigestion. Also it has been shown to reduce or eliminate acid reflux.

## How to grow

**Culture:** Yacon grows quickly in rich, well-drained soil in full or mostly sun. Prepare the bed by working in a couple of inches of compost. Plant out only after the last chance of frost. Cover the tubers with about 1 inch of soil and water them in. Then apply an inch or two of mulch (compost). Though the plants are drought tolerant, keep them well watered for the best crop. Yacon crowns can be over wintered in a cold frame or greenhouse. Just dig them up in the garden at the season's end. Cut the stems back to about 4" long. Plant in large pots in clean potting soil. In late winter or early spring the plants will sprout.

**Harvest:** Tubers are produced in late summer and into autumn. When flowering stops and the plant dies back, start your harvest. The tubers gather sugar as the plant withers so most harvest should be done after dieback, though you can harvest a few smaller tubers. If you plan to store them a bit before eating them, dry them in the sun for a few days. Reserve the smaller red tubers, with several eyes, for planting. You'll find the red tubers — which are also edible — right next to the stem's base.

The red tubers harvested for the following year's plants are easily stored in a damp medium: compost, sand, sawdust or sterile potting soil. The brown tubers are usually eaten quickly because of their sweet crunchiness.

**Eating:** The tubers should be peeled first because the peel tastes resinous. Then enjoy the fresh tuber like an apple or cut into sticks and sprinkle with lime zest, lime juice and some coarse kosher salt as you would do with jicama. The tubers juice well in an electric juicer and can be used to sweeten other juices or in juice combos. Young stems can be used as a cooked vegetables.