



Nichols Garden Nursery
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**Herbs, Seeds & Goods
For the Gardener Cook**

**Serving Home Gardeners
For 65 Years**

OCA 10 TUBERS

Originating in the Andean highlands of South America, Oca has served as a staple food for people living in the higher elevations of South America for more than 200 years. It is the primary source of carbohydrates, calcium, and iron.

Use Oca the same way as potatoes. Boil, steam, bake, roast or simply eat raw in salads. Eat whole, sliced, mashed or grated. Try frying or baking tossed with your favorite blend of herbs. Leave Oca exposed to the sun (outside if it is not freezing or inside on a windowsill) for a few days to sweeten and then eat raw in salads or eat cooked. You do not have to expose Oca to sunlight but it does enhance the sweetness of the tiny tuber. In South America the acidic tubers are allowed to dry several days to reduce the acidity. Sunning reduces the amount of oxalate which interferes with the absorption of calcium in your body

Planting

Plant in full sun in well drained soil high in humus. Prepare your soil by adding compost or other materials that increase the humus in the soil if needed. Oca grows best in cool weather so plant in garden in a cooler location but in full sun. Do not plant up against a building or next to concrete such as driveways or sidewalks. Do not apply fertilizer once planted. pH level of soil should be 5.3 to 7.8.

Plant tubers directly into garden after the last frost in your area. Or start tubers indoors and transplant into garden after the last frost. Plant tubers directly into the garden in small holes 2 to 4 inches deep. Cover with a little soil until the shoots start to emerge. Then keep putting more soil on the hill of Oca. The tubers start from the buried stems so keep hilling up the soil to encourage more tuber development and to keep the succulent stems more upright. Keep the Oca well watered for best production and for crunchy stems.

Harvest

Oca stems and leaves are most tender during cool weather. Harvest stem and leaves when weather has cooled in fall. Harvest tubers after first frosts usually in mid November. Dig tubers and allow to harden off in a sunny location, either outside or indoors if your climate is very cold. Harden off in this fashion for three to six days.

Storage

After harvest the recommended storage of edible tubers is in the vegetable tray of your refrigerator, but you can also store in a cool, humid place much as you would a potato. Check tubers frequently to make sure they are not drying out. If drying is apparent, cover with a slight amount of dampened coco fiber or sawdust to keep them from drying out completely. Barely cover with just dampened material not soaking wet. Oca will store until Spring whether you are eating the tubers or using them as your planting stock.

Arrival: Store the tubers in a cool area until ready to plant.

YACON OR BOLIVIAN SUNROOT

“Yacon contains inulin, a fructose polymer as well as minerals and free amino acids. As these food tubers age, they sweeten since the fructose polymer is broken down to the single sugar units, fructose or fruit sugar. We have learned that the inulin in Yacon is a prime foodsource for bifidobacteria which reside in our large intestines. These bacteria, also called lactobacteria, are found in yogurt and are an integral part of a healthy digestive system. Likely they supply us with vitamin B12 as well as other essential nutrients. Thus Yacon which also contains some free amino acids like glutamine is an important health promoting food.” Alan Kapular, PhD.

PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS:

We ship Yacon plants in a pot with at least one plant per container. After receiving your plant, unpackage them and keep the plant growing in a frost free environment. To keep the plant growing at a slower pace, maintain a temperature around 55-60 degrees in full light. If you are able to transplant to the garden in a short time (2-3 weeks) the temperature indoors can be higher than 60 degrees. The plant will put on more growth and will need to be transplanted in that 1-3 week timeframe. As always with indoor vegetable plants provide light. When the nights are above freezing you can transplant to the garden. If an unexpected frost is likely, cover the plant as the leaves are tender. Plant the Yacon in fertile soil so that the tuberous crown is 2-4 inches below the soil surface or plant the same depth as in the container. Light frosts in spring may burn some of the early leaves but will not harm the crown or significantly reduce productivity. Plants are tolerant of light frosts, but they are killed by a freeze.

Yacon is harvested in the fall. It produces two types of tubers. The large lateral tubers have no eyes for propagation and are strictly used to eat. The other tubers will have eyes and are located above the lateral tubers around the growing stem. These have eyes much as potatoes and are stored for the winter to replant again in the spring. To store cover in loose sawdust or other such material, that is barely damp. Check often for rot or mildew and clean planting tubers as needed.