

Did You Know?



Wasabi – *Eutrema japonicum*

- Is in the Brassicaceae family, the same family as horseradish, mustard, cabbage and kale
- Japanese horseradish is a common name (although it is not in the same genus as horseradish)
- Prepared wasabi comes from grating the rhizome of the *Eutrema japonicum* plant
- Most commonly sold as a dried powder or as a paste in a tube
- Originated in Japan, and can be traced back to 794 CE
- The condiment sold as wasabi often contains no wasabi at all, but is rather a mixture of horseradish, mustard and food coloring
- Leaves, rhizomes, stems (petioles) and flowers of the wasabi plant are edible
- Grate the wasabi rhizome just before serving as it loses flavor 10- 15 minutes after it has been prepared
- Traditionally, the grater used to prepare wasabi was made from a piece of dry sharkskin stapled to a wooden paddle. Grating was done by pressing the rhizome onto the paddle and moved in a circular motion until a paste formed.
- Studied for medicinal uses, including as an anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and to reduce risk of osteoporosis, heart disease, and cancer
- Is high in antioxidants, vitamin C and contains some vitamin A and iron
- Wasabi grows in cool, shady conditions in temperate regions (45-70°F), preferring high humidity during the summer months and ample water.
- Wasabi requires 18 months and up to three years of growth to reach maturity
- Commercially, wasabi is grown in northern Japan, parts of China, Taiwan, Korea and New Zealand. The right climate balance for successful wasabi growth can be found in North America in the rain forests on the Oregon Coast and parts of the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina and Tennessee.
- Wasabi has the reputation of being difficult to grow and the most successful horticulture practices are guarded secrets.