



## Horseradish and Millipedes

### It's just about horseradish harvesting time!

*Rick Gush*

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Photo by Rick Gush

It's just about horseradish harvesting time! Yummy! Most horseradish growers wait until the first frost kills the leaves, but I like to harvest earlier, not just because I'm almost finished with the last jar of prepared horseradish from last year's crop. I also think that the shoots re-planted in fall grow better than those replanted in winter. Although the leaves don't look anything similar, horseradish, *Armoracia rusticana*, is a relative of cabbage and broccoli and is native to Eastern Europe. Horseradish is a very common condiment in the cuisine of most northern European countries, southwestern Illinois produces 85 percent of the world's commercially cultivated horseradish. There are a few horseradish growers in the hills around Umbria, but Italians, including my wife, aren't generally big horseradish consumers.

Making prepared horseradish couldn't be much easier. I dig up the roots and wash them off well, which is the hardest part. I separate out a few nice shoots to plant for next year's crop and then throw the rest of the roots into the blender. I like my horseradish a bit chunky so I just chop the roots for a minute or so, but if I leave the blender running for longer I can produce a very creamy blend. I mix a small amount of salt and vinegar into the horseradish slurry and then pour the mix into little jars that I have previously boiled. I don't use any fancy sealing, just the regular jar cap screwed on tightly. The resultant jars of prepared horseradish can last for a whole year easily, and they don't seem to ever attract any mold, even once they have been opened.

I should mention how spicy and gaseous the chopped horseradish in the blender is. It makes chopped Cayenne peppers look tame by comparison. Lifting up the cover and smelling the mix is a very bad idea as the gas can burn one's eyes, as I know from experience. Wives who do not like horseradish should definitely be away from home during horseradish preparation.

Photo by Rick Gush Today's second photo is of a good looking millipede I found in the garden yesterday. I think it might be either a Spirostreptidae or a Rhinocricus. Unlike centipedes that do bite sometimes, millipedes just secrete stinky compounds that can be poisonous. I remember some of the yellow spotted millipedes in the States emit a cyanide juice that can make people sick.

I don't have trouble with either centipedes or millipedes in the garden and consider them helpful predators. I wasted a good quarter of an hour as I watched this fellow wander around my garden table while I photographed him. It was one of those moments when I marvel at how wonderful our whole biological system is and how many amazing creatures make up the mix.

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