

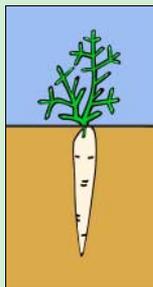
Roots

Roots absorb water and the raw materials from the soil that the plant needs for making food. Nearly all land plants have root hairs. These fine hairs absorb water and dissolved mineral salts from the soil to help the plant grow. Roots, as well as storing food, also anchor the plant in the ground. Not all roots grow in the ground however. Some grow on walls or other plants, such as ivy growing on a tree.

THE MAIN TYPES OF ROOT

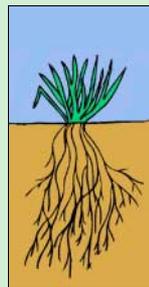
Tap root

Some plants have one main root known as the tap root. Many smaller branch roots may grow from the tap root.



Fibrous root system

Other plants have no main root but many roots of roughly the same size. This is known as a fibrous root system.



Root Vegetables

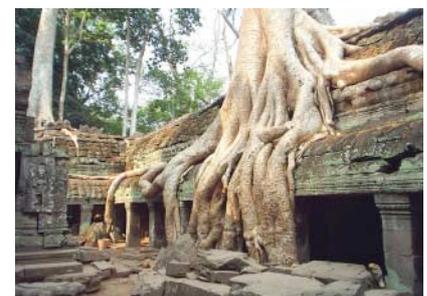
Some tap roots are fleshy and can be eaten by humans. Examples of tap roots that we eat are carrots, turnips, parsnips, beetroots and radishes. Known as root vegetables, they are filled with lots of nutrients as they are giant stores of food for the plant.

Unusual Roots

Mangrove swamps are found in tropical and sub-tropical places. Mangrove trees grow in salty coastal waters, in areas rich in sediment. This photograph below of a red mangrove tree, shows its unusual roots. The tree props itself above the water level with stilt roots, where it can absorb air through pores in its bark.



Ta Prohm Temple, in Cambodia, is an amazing sight. Roots of the Bayan tree have grown and wound themselves around the walls and towers of the temple.



What else has roots?

It is not only plants and trees that have roots. Hair, teeth and nails also have them and they have similar functions to plant roots. The roots in a tooth, help to anchor it in the mouth. Hair and nail roots, as well as acting as anchors, provide important cells to help the hair and nails to growing.

