

CARROT

They seem like one of the most demanding vegetables to grow at first, but growing crisp, sweet carrots is easy once your soil is prepped and more conducive to their root development. One of the best things about carrots is that they taste amazing fresh from the garden, but if you choose to keep them and use them throughout the winter, the roots just get sweeter and sweeter as the months go by. They are also easy to store for winter and spring use right in your garden where they grew all summer. To grow really long carrots (10-12 inches) you need loose sandy soil and about 75-90 days growing season, but for those of us with less than perfect soil conditions, there are some excellent varieties that are well suited for heavier soils too.

SOIL PREPARATION

Carrots prefer a sandy soil, rich in organic matter, well drained, and not too heavy. They also need full sun exposure. Before planting, incorporate 1-2 inches of well composted organic matter, Humic, and 1 lb. of all-purpose fertilizer (we recommend "That's all it Takes" complete fertilizer or Happy Frog Organic Tomato & Vegetable Food) per 100 square feet and work them in to a depth of 4-6 inches. Heavy, clay-based soils must be amended with compost and organic matter to encourage and allow for good root development. For best results, add 2-4 inches of a variety of different types of organic matter and 50 lbs. of Zeolite soil conditioner per 100 square feet each fall for multiple years to increase drainage and nutrient availability. By doing this yearly, over time you can create a better growing environment for your garden plants to thrive in and produce. Please consult our Soil Preparation Guide in the attached appendix.

PLANTING

There are many tried and tested methods for successfully seeding and growing carrots, but this one is our favorite. Rake a shallow seed bed either in rows or in larger squares, depending on your garden size. Sprinkle the seeds as evenly as you can over the seed bed, approximately 1/2 to 1" apart (closer is ok), and then cover the seeds with 1/4 inch of peat moss, Coconut Coir, vermiculite, or a light potting soil, and tamp the soil down lightly with your foot or a tool, compacting the soil slightly. The seed must stay warm and moist to germinate properly, and it is not unusual for it to

take 14-21 days for germination. A soaker hose works well to keep the seed moist, but for years we have had success moistening the seed with a watering can, and then placing a board (2x4 or bigger) over the planted area. It will help warm the soil and maintain moisture for many days, increasing chances of germination. Moisture and heat are essential for good germination. When the seedlings are about 2" tall, thin the carrots to 1 plant every 2 inches, otherwise your roots will remain small and underdeveloped.

VARIETIES

There are so many delicious varieties of carrots to choose from, it is difficult to select the perfect variety every time - but here are a few of our very favorites. Nantes-type carrots tend to be more cylindrical in shape, not tapered, about 7 inches long, with little or no core, and have excellent sweet flavor and crispness. Our favorites are Sweet Ingot (New), Tendersweet, and Nantes Coreless. Other favorite varieties that we carry include: Rainbow Mix (orange, yellow, red, purple and white carrots all in one mixture) which is absolutely fun to grow, with great colors and flavor; Thumbellina, a short, golf ball sized carrot that is sweet and delicious, but doesn't need deep, loose soil; and Royal Chantenay, a carrot with a thick, shorter root (5 inches), strong top, and excellent flavor - this carrot handles heavier soils much better than the Nantes types.



Mark suggests:
"Try covering your carrot seeds with nothing but Coconut Coir. It holds moisture better than anything else and acts as a buffer to keep the seeds from washing away. Our germination time has gone from 21 days to 12 when using Coconut Coir."

WATER

Carrots need regular water and consistent soil moisture to produce well. Use of a soaker hose and light mulches can assist in maintaining correct soil moisture and guaranteeing a healthy harvest. We recommend about 1-2 inches of water applied per week in 2-3 applications. Moisture fluctuations can cause root cracking, forking of roots, and poor yields. Maintaining consistent moisture will prevent most of these issues and assist in proper root development.

FERTILIZER

About 6 weeks after germination, apply a balanced vegetable food ("That's All it Takes" or Happy Frog Organic Tomato & Vegetable Food) down the side of the row of plants and water thoroughly. 1-2 cups per 10 feet of row works well. We recommend the Tomato & Vegetable Food because it contains many micro-nutrients (like Boron & Iron) that prevent common problems in developing carrots.

We also recommend treating your carrot seed or plants with beneficial microbes and mycorrhizae (Kangaroots or Myke). These added helpers bring nutrients and water directly to the plants that host them, making them stronger, more resistant to insects and diseases, and more drought tolerant.

CARROT	
PLANTING TIME	Group B
PLANTING METHOD	Rows or Broadcast
PLANT SPACING	2"
ROW SPACING	2-3'
SEED DEPTH	1/8"
TIME TO HARVEST	60-70 Days
WATER NEEDS	1/2", 2-3x weekly
TRANSPLANT/DIRECT SOW	Direct
SPECIAL ISSUES	Weeds Carrot root weevil, rodents Late heavy water splits carrots Sun exposure causes green roots

COMMON PROBLEMS

Few insects bother carrots, but the Carrot Rust fly and Carrot weevils will consistently do damage to the roots throughout the growing season and into the fall. To prevent these critters from starting in the first place, use a row cover to prevent the adult flies from laying eggs on the carrot tops or in the soil. Basic insecticides like Hi-Yield Permethrin or Ferti-lome Triple Action are also very safe and effective at controlling these pests. Some gardeners will use Hi-Yield Garden, Pet & Livestock dust in the rows with the seeds when planting and then again every 6 weeks to prevent the insects from damaging their precious crop.

HARVESTING

At about 40-50 days, the carrots will have grown to about finger size, and are ready to start using. Most varieties will reach maturity in 75-90 days from germination and could be anywhere from 5-12 inches long and 1-2 inches in diameter depending on the variety. Harvest your carrots with a digging fork, as most sweet carrots have tender tops, and they won't pull out of the ground easily, breaking off right at the surface. Once harvested, you can store the carrots in sand in a container in your cold storage area, or just leave them in the ground with 4-8 inches of mulch over the top of them to use "fresh" from the ground all winter. We gather up leaves in plastic bags and cover the carrots with the bags until we are ready to dig - it keeps the deer away from the roots, and insulates them perfectly from the cold of winter.

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