

Homemade **POTTING SOIL**

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Below are the 3 main components to my DIY carrot soil mix. **Combine these in equal amounts** to create the perfect soil to grow great carrots.

Sphagnum Peat Moss

Peat moss is sought after because of its ability to retain several times its weight in moisture. It releases moisture to plant roots as needed. It's widely available to buy and is inexpensive. Coco coir (the fibrous material around the shell of a coconut) is also a very good option in place of peat moss.

Perlite or Vermiculite

Perlite is a volcanic glass/ash that's used to aerate the soil and keep it well draining. It can hold 3-4 times its weight in water without becoming soggy. It's sterile and pH-neutral and doesn't break down easily. Vermiculite is a mineral that's expanded in a furnace, making it lightweight. It adds aeration to soil and retains nutrients. Handle gently, otherwise it will compact and lose the ability to hold air. Vermiculite holds water, contains calcium and magnesium, and is almost pH-neutral. Perlite is usually less expensive than vermiculite.

NOTE: Vermiculite naturally contains a small amount of asbestos, so wear a mask and only use in ventilated areas. Wetting it helps the dust from spreading.

Compost, aka "Black Gold"

Compost adds lots of nutrients to the mix. It's a good source of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. The nutrients in compost are slowly released. Micronutrients in compost are essential for plant growth. Compost retains moisture, improves the chemical, physical, and biological quality of soil, and creates a better environment for plant roots.

Alternative & Eco-Friendly Soil Mixes

Peat moss, perlite, and vermiculite contribute to pollution when mined, processed, and packaged. Composted tree bark, wood chips, and rotted leaves are good substitutes.

Alfalfa may be another good option to replace peat moss. It's rich in nitrogen which is slowly released into soil.

Coarse sand (bulider's sand) can replace perlite to lighten soil and improve drainage. A little sand goes a long way. Adding too much will make the soil heavy. Avoid fine sands which end up making soil dense and heavy too.

Finely ground pine bark, Coco coir, and ground coconut husk are good alternatives to vermiculite. Coco coir can hold up to nine times its weight in water and also help aerate the soil.

Many gardeners use their best garden soil amended with compost or composted manure. Clean, commercial top soil would be okay to use as long as it's untreated. Soil doesn't go BAD, it just becomes lacking in nutrients. So organic matter needs added back into soil over time.

Alternative Fertilizers if your soil mix is lacking in compost

The fertilizer choice would depend on the base growing mix. And since many fertilizers affect the pH, choose appropriately! Blood meal adds nitrogen and bone meal adds phosphorus. Kelp meal, greensand, or other minerals add minor nutrients. Composted manure is often a fan favorite for gardeners.



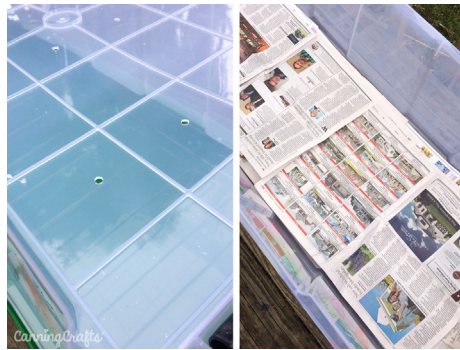
Mix soil "ingredients" in equal amounts.

PLANTING CARROTS *in containers*

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Carrots flourish in a loose and light soil mix. A soil that isn't compacted will allow carrots to grow longer. My DIY soil mix uses equal combination of sphagnum peat moss, perlite, and compost. The cost is much less to make your own soil compared to store-bought. PLUS, you can tailor your mix for specific veggies grown.



For carrots, find a container one to one-and-a-half feet deep. Or use a shorter box and plant shorter carrot varieties! I used a plastic Christmas tree storage container. I drilled a few dozen 1/4" holes on the bottom for drainage. I placed newspaper inside on the bottom before filling with soil to help keep it from draining out.



Grow PERFECT carrots with the right soil mix.



Pelleted seed versus regular carrot seeds

Sprinkle carrot seeds along the surface. The seeds should not be planted deep at all! Spread a rather thin layer of your soil mixture overtop, or do not cover at all. Carrots need a very moist soil to germinate in.

TIPS: Pre-water the ground before dropping the seeds. Then water again lightly after covering the seeds with soil. During germination, keep the container covered to help retain moisture and keep it a little warmer too.

Try Pelleted Carrot Seeds for faster and easier planting! Pelleted seeds have a white coating around them which makes tiny seeds easier to see and handle. With pelleted carrot seed, space seed 1.5" apart. Push the seed down into the soil about 1/4" deep. Pelleted seeds also work well in mechanical planters because they are less likely to jam. If spaced properly when planted, you do not usually need to thin seedlings from pelleted seed.



Once the seeds germinate and have spouted to a couple inches high, you will need to thin them out. If you planted pelleted seed, you may not need to thin them out, lucky you! Each remaining carrot should be about 1" - 1.5" apart. The thinning process is very important! Overcrowded carrots won't get the nutrients, moisture, and space needed to thrive. You may need to mound up soil around your carrots as they grow so the roots aren't exposed.

BONUS TIP: Don't toss your thinned carrot greens! They are edible and super nutritious! Eat in salads, smoothies, or toss into a batch of homemade pesto.

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