

How to Grow Carrots

General

Carrots are second only to beets in sugar content, and they're packed with beta carotene, vitamins, minerals, and fibre. They also happen to be delicious and easy to grow!

Latin

Daucus carota
Family: Apiaceae

Difficulty

Easy

Season & Zone

Season: Cool season

Exposure: Full-sun

Zone: 4-10

Timing

Direct sow April to mid-July for harvests from July to November. Sow at 3 week intervals for a continuous harvest. Optimal soil temperature: 7-30°C (45-85°F). Seeds take as long as 14-21 days to germinate.

Starting

Because carrot seeds are tiny, they need to be sown shallowly. The trick is to keep the top-most layer of soil damp during the long germination period. Water deeply prior to planting. Direct sow the tiny seeds 5mm (¼") deep, 4 seeds per 2cm (1"), and firm soil lightly after seeding. Make sure the seeds are only just buried. Water the area with the gentlest stream you can provide, and keep it constantly moist until the seeds sprout.

Growing

Ideal pH: 6.0-6.8. The softer and more humus-based the soil, the better. When soil is dry enough in spring, work it to a fine texture. Broadcast and dig in ½ cup complete organic fertilizer for every 3m (10') of row. Avoid fresh manure. Carrots will become misshapen, but still edible if they hit anything hard as they grow down into the soil. Keep weeded and watered.

It is very important to thin carrots in order to allow them room to grow, and so they don't compete for available nutrients, moisture, and light. Thin to 4-10cm (1½-4") when the young plants are 2cm (1") tall. Use wider spacing to get larger roots. As they grow, carrots push up, out of the soil, so hill soil up to prevent getting a green shoulder.

Harvest

Carrots can be harvested at any size, but flavour is best when the carrot has turned bright orange. After harvest, store at cold temperatures just above 0°C. You can store in sand or sawdust, or simply leave carrots under heaped soil in the garden during the winter, and pull as you need them.

Seed Info

In optimal conditions at least 60% of seeds will germinate. Usual seed life: 3 years. Per 100' row: 2.4M seeds, per acre: 1,044M seeds. Rates are for raw, not pelleted seeds.

Diseases & Pests

The Carrot Rust Fly - This pest lays its eggs at the base of the growing carrots. The larva of the fly chews tunnels and unsightly grooves through the surface of the root, causing rot. Unfortunately the damage isn't just cosmetic; the activities of the Carrot Rust Fly larva changes the flavour of the carrot and makes it quite inedible. Use our floating row cover to keep the adults away from the carrots. Plant after the beginning of June to avoid the first and worst infestation period. The good news for apartment dwellers who want to grow carrots on their balconies is the Carrot Rust Fly is not a good flyer. It is unlikely to infest their high-rise crop.

Wireworm - These are the larva of click beetles. They are about an inch and a half long, slender and reddish brown. When squeezed they turn as rigid as a wire, hence the name. Wireworms chew irregular holes through roots, making the carrots inedible. Wireworms prefer a moist soil so preparing your carrot bed so that it is well drained will help. Interplanting with mustard leaf is an excellent way to discourage wireworm damage. The flavour of the mustard is one deterrent, and mustard also helps to dry out the soil, forcing the wireworm away from the roots.

Predatory nematodes are an effective control for both Carrot Rust Fly and wireworm. Apply generously in the spring when the larva of both pests is most active.

Companion Planting

Plant with beans, Brassicas, chives, leeks, lettuce, onions, peas, peppers, pole beans, radish, rosemary, sage, and tomatoes. Avoid planting with dill, parsnips, and potatoes. Carrots planted near tomatoes may have stunted roots, but will have exceptional flavour. Chives also benefit carrots.



