

## GROWING GUIDE FOR CARROTS

<b>Binomial Name:</b>	Daucus carota
<b>Varieties:</b>	Cape Market, Scarlet Nantes, Cosmic Purple, Amarillo, Muscade, Danvers 126 Half Long, Tonda Di Parigi, Kuroda Long 8", Atomic Red, St.Valery, Belicum 2, Lunar White.
<b>Start:</b>	Seeds
<b>Germination:</b>	7 to 21 days, 10°C to 30°C
<b>Seed Life (viability):</b>	3-5 years
<b>Soil:</b>	Well drained, loose
<b>Sunlight:</b>	Full sun
<b>Sow Seeds:</b>	2.5 to 5 cm apart
<b>Thin to:</b>	5 to 10 cm apart
<b>Ave. Days to Harvest:</b>	65 to 80
<b>Good Companions:</b>	Beans, Celery, Chicory, Chives, Dill, Garlic, Chard, Leeks, Lettuce, Marjoram, Onions, Peas, Peppers, Radish, Rosemary, Tomatoes, Yarrow.
<b>Bad Companions:</b>	Parsnips, Sage

### Sowing & Planting:

Good quality carrots require plentiful moisture and a soil that is deep (at least 20-25cm), loose, free of stones and high in organic matter. Roots can become twisted and forked in heavy or stony soil. Carrots prefer a soil with a pH of 6.0 to 6.8 but can tolerate 5.5 to 7.5. They require only moderate nitrogen, too much nitrogen in the soil can also cause root branching and/or 'hairy' roots.

Although carrots can endure summer heat in many areas, they grow best when planted in early spring. Midsummer plantings, that mature quickly in cool autumn weather, produce tender and sweet "baby" carrots that are much prized.

Germination can take up to three weeks and the seedlings may not emerge uniformly. If heavy rains occur after sowing, compacting the soil surface, no seedlings may emerge. Thin the seedlings when they are about 2.5cm tall to no more than three seedlings per 3cm for finger carrots; one or two seedlings per 3cm for carrots that will be harvested young; and one seedling per 5cm for larger varieties that will be allowed to develop to full size. Cutting rather than pulling reduces disturbance of the remaining plants.

Tip: To improve germination in dry weather, make a small furrow about 5cm deep. Sow seed thinly and cover with about 1cm of soil. Cover the furrow with a plank or stiff board to retain the soil moisture until the seeds germinate. You can also sow radishes in the same row. They germinate quickly, break the soil crust, and mark the row. Thin and/or harvest radishes before they compete with carrots. When sowing, mix seed in roughly equal proportions with sand, fine vermiculite, or dried coffee grounds to make it easier to sow evenly.

### Growing:

Use a good mulch to keep the soil cool, conserve moisture and to keep any exposed carrot "shoulders" from turning green and bitter. Another option is to hill soil over the shoulders.

Make additional plantings every three weeks through midsummer for a continuous supply and for autumn harvests. Sowing in very early spring is possible, but some varieties will bolt if temperatures are too cold. Plant crops for autumn harvest about 10 to 12 weeks before the first frost.

Root quality is best when soil temperatures are 15-20C. The shape of the root is determined within the first few weeks after germination when the new plant extends its taproot deep into the soil. If it encounters obstacles (such as rocks or high water table) or is damaged, shape and quality of the root will suffer. Young carrot seedlings are weak and grow slowly. It is essential to keep weeds under control for the first few weeks.

To prevent diseases, don't plant carrots in the same spot more than once every 3 years.

### **Harvesting:**

Carrots can be harvested or "pulled" when the roots are at least 1cm in diameter. Under usual conditions, carrot tops may not be strong enough to withstand actually being pulled from the ground and a little digging with a fork to loosen the soil helps to remove the roots without damage.

Finger carrots are usually ready to harvest within 50 to 60 days. Other varieties should be allowed to grow until they have reached a diameter of at least 2cm (about 60 to 70 days after planting). They may then be harvested over a 3 to 4 week period. Summer planted carrots may be left in the ground until a killing frost. Some gardeners place a heavy straw mulch over the row so that carrots can be harvested throughout the winter.

For carrots to be stored, cut off the tops 2cm above the root and place in storage at 0-4°C with a high humidity. Carrots may be placed in a refrigerator, buried in lightly moist sand in an underground cellar or stored in the garden in a pit insulated with straw. Under proper storage conditions, carrots can keep for 4 to 6 months.

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