

CARROTS



Types of Carrots

- Nantes are fast and easy to grow, and adapt to a range of climates and soils.
- Chantenay carrots develop stocky roots that become sweeter as the soil cools in the fall.
- Miniature carrots have small, shallow roots that are often quite sweet. They're good for heavy clay soil.
- Emperor carrots are long and need deep, sandy soil to thrive.
- Danvers carrots make great juice, and the sturdy roots store well, too.

When to Plant Carrots

★ In the spring, sow carrot seeds in fertile, well-worked soil about two weeks before your last frost date. In cool climates, continue planting every three weeks until midsummer.

★ In summer, begin sowing seeds for fall and winter carrots 10 to 12 weeks before your average first fall frost.

Saving Carrot Seeds

- ★ Carrots are biennial and therefore won't flower and make seed until their second year.
- ★ In cold climates, open-pollinated carrots kept in cold storage through winter can be replanted in early spring for seed production purposes. When the seed clusters have ripened to brown, collect them in a paper bag.
- ★ Then allow them to dry for another week indoors before crushing the clusters and gathering the seeds. Discard the smallest seeds. Store the largest seeds in a cool, dry place for up to three years.

Carrot Growing Tips

Keep the soil moist for at least 10 consecutive days after sowing, because carrots take longer to germinate than other vegetables. To reduce surface evaporation during the germination period, cover newly seeded soil with boards or old blankets for five to six days.

Check daily, and remove the covers as soon as the first seeds germinate. Seeds germinate best when soil temperatures range between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

Reduce weed competition by sowing carrot seeds in shallow furrows filled with weed-free potting soil. Cover the ground between rows with newspapers topped by a mulch of grass clippings.

Sow carrots with a "nurse crop" of radishes. The fast-growing radishes will shelter tiny carrot seedlings while helping to suppress weeds.

Be stingy with nitrogen. Among fertilizers, carrots favor compost or vermicompost worked into the soil prior to planting; they respond to abundant phosphorous and potassium more than to high nitrogen levels. Carrots take up nutrients best in soil with a pH between 5.8 and 7.0. Use lime to raise the pH of acidic soil.

Harvest carefully. Before pulling carrots, use a digging fork to loosen the soil just outside the row.

Harvest small blossom clusters from overwintered plants to use as cut flowers. Thinning the blossoms helps the plants channel energy to the biggest seed-bearing umbels (flower clusters springing from the same point).

Max out the season. To eat carrots year round, grow fast-maturing varieties in spring, and make summer sowings for a season-stretching fall crop.

Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation lines to keep the soil constantly moist.

Cover the shoulders of all maturing carrots with mulch to keep them from turning green.