

Carrots

Daucus carota

Carrots from a supermarket are uniformly long, slim, and orange. By contrast, homegrown carrots come in assorted colors, shapes, and sizes. Choose your varieties based on your growing space, the texture of your soil, and your color preference.

TIP – Carrot seeds must be kept constantly moist to germinate. Cover seed rows with a ¼-inch layer of sterile, moisture-retentive potting mix to reduce weed competition and hold moisture.

Location and soil Plant varieties with tapered roots in deep, well-drained soil that is free of rocks—a raised bed is ideal. Carrots grow best in full sun, but tolerate part shade.

When to Plant Sow seed directly into the garden throughout the cooler months. In cold winter climates carrots are best sown in spring, and again in late summer. They thrive when air temperatures are between 60 and 70°F.

Seed depth and Spacing Sprinkle the small seeds sparingly in wide rows, so seeds are about ½-inch apart. Space rows about a foot apart, and cover with a dusting of sifted compost or a thin layer of sterile potting mix. These materials will not form a crust, as fine soil is apt to do.

Germination Seeds can take from 8 to 20 days to emerge, depending on soil temperature. Some gardeners find that covering rows with damp burlap helps to keep the seed bed moist and prevents washouts from heavy rain. If you do this, lift the burlap daily to check for germination. Remove it when seedlings emerge.

Thinning Ideally, seedlings will sprout ½- to 1-inch apart, and you won't need to thin. Rather, pull baby carrots as they begin to develop, which will allow larger, plumper roots to fill their space. If seedlings are too close, thin to 1-inch apart when they are about 2 inches tall.

Care Water daily with a gentle stream until seeds germinate. Continue to keep young seedlings watered and weeded until the plants are large enough to shade out competition. After establishment, water deeply as needed.

Fertilize Carrots do not benefit from high-N fertilizers. Plant them in a bed amended with compost and apply a slow-release granular organic fertilizer at planting time.

Harvest Harvest roots throughout the summer and fall months; they pull most easily after a good soaking. After frost, cover carrot rows with straw and harvest before the ground freezes.

Nutrition Excellent source of Vitamin A, and a good source of Vitamins C, K, and potassium.

	Bambino	Scarlet Nantes	Little Finger
	 <small>© Nova-Photo-Graphik</small>	 <small>© Nova-Photo-Graphik</small>	 <small>© Nova-Photo-Graphik</small>
Description	Cylindrical, blunt, orange roots are sweet and nearly coreless	French heirloom with red-orange, slightly tapered roots with almost no inner core. Flavor is crisp and sweet.	Heirloom baby Nantes-type carrot developed in France for pickling and canning. Extra tender and sweet.
Carrot size	4 to 6 inches	6 to 8 inches	3 to 4 inches
Culture	Good choice for heavy soils or container growing	Loosen soil to a depth of 8-10 inches	Good choice for heavy soils or container growing
Days to harvest	60-70	65-75	50-65