



Carrots

There are five main types of carrots (*Daucus carota*):

- **Chantenay type**- 2 to 2 ½ inches in diameter at the shoulder and 5 to 6 inches long with a medium to large neck. Color is medium to light orange with a red core. Better for shallow, heavy soils than the long, skinny Emperor types.
- **Imperator type**- the main, commercial, fresh-market type, grown on up to 95% of the carrot acreage in Texas and California. They are 7 to 8 inches long with a top diameter of 1 ½ inches. Roots are deep orange in color with a lighter orange core. Roots become woody when fully mature, but are excellent when harvested at their prime.
- **Danvers type**- conical with a top diameter of 2 to 2 ½ inches and length of up to 7 inches. Deep orange with a light center. Quality is excellent in young roots; becomes fibrous with age.
- **Nantes types**- cylindrical with a blunt tip, 6 to 7 inches long and 1 ½ inches in diameter. Roots are bright orange with a small core. Tops are often small and require careful digging at harvest.
- **Miniature and Oxheart types**: Baby carrots are sometimes termed Amsterdam types. The roots are 2 inches in diameter and only 2 to 3 inches long. Stump-rooted or round carrots are suitable for heavy, clay soil or container gardening.

Carrots are a hardy biennial. Treat as annual.

Planting:

Carrots are best planted in the spring and fall. Direct seed into loose, well-drained soil that is free from rocks, clods, or debris. Raised beds work well for carrots. Soil pH should be in the 6.0-6.8 range.

For a spring crop, plant when the soil temperature has reached at least 45°F. Carrots take 1 – 3 weeks to germinate, so try marking the rows by sprinkling a few radish seeds in with them. (Harvest radishes before they compete with carrots.)

Cover seed with ¼ to ½ inch of soil and keep evenly moist. Best shape and quality are achieved when grown between 55°- 75°F. Temperatures over 70°F reduce root length. For fall crop, plant 10 – 12 weeks before first frost.

Cultivation:

- **Fertilizing** – Light to medium-heavy feeder. Incorporate a balanced fertilizer (5-10-10) prior to planting.
- **Watering** – Requires plentiful moisture. In dry weather, water lightly each day until plants are established. Mulch to retain moisture. Ease up on watering near time of harvest, as excessive moisture may cause roots to crack.
- **Weeding** – Apply mulch to control weeds. Use only shallow cultivation, if necessary, and avoid root disturbance.

- **Special Directions** – Thin to 1 - 4 inches apart when plants are about 2 inches tall. Cut seedlings rather than pulling them out, to avoid root disturbance.

Harvesting:

For fresh use, harvest carrots before they exceed 1 inch in diameter, or about 65 – 75 days after planting. Fall planted carrots can be harvested throughout the winter months if covered with an organic mulch of straw or shredded leaves.

Storage and Preservation:

Store at 33 degrees F in high humidity to prevent wilting. Carrots with tops on can be refrigerated about 10 – 4 days. Carrots left in soil, well mulched, can last until winter.

Nutrition:

Rich in beta-carotene (converts to Vitamin A). Also a source of Vitamins C & B6, folate and essential minerals including potassium, calcium, magnesium and manganese

Preparation & Use:

Scrub with a vegetable brush or peel and cut into pieces – can be boiled, steamed, baked, sautéed, roasted or eaten raw.

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