

# Crazy for Carrots!

## WHY CARROTS?

This easy to grow cool season vegetable has few pests & diseases, is tolerant of frosts & freezes, makes plenty to eat in small areas, and can be harvested over a long period of time.

At 60-80 days from seed to harvest, this is a fast crop and kids love to pull & eat them!

To ensure good germination, soil temperatures should be above 61°. Seeds need constant soil moisture and light. Make sure the soil is wet before you plant your seeds.

## NUTRITIOUS!

Carrots are an excellent source of the deep yellow carotenoids that make vitamin A. They are also a good source of magnesium, potassium, vitamins C & B, & a form of easily absorbed calcium.

Sow in rows 6-10" apart with 1" between rows. Cover with 1/8" - 1/4" of fine soil. Place wet burlap or straw over the area and keep constantly moist. Remove covering when seedlings emerge 7-20 days after sowing.

## WHEN?

In Central Florida plant seeds between August & March. October is the best month - it avoids high temperatures & rains. The cool season is the best time for carrots.

Carrots require low levels of nitrogen (N), moderate phosphate (P) and high potash (K) for good edible root production. When planted on a soil with high organic matter, little or no N fertilizer will be needed.

## WHERE?

Carrots prefer full sun but benefit from shade during warm days. They prefer deep, loose, well-drained sandy or loamy soils with a pH of 6.3-6.8

## TIPS FOR GROWING CARROTS SUCCESSFULLY

- **WHY CARROTS?** Easy to grow, low risk, low management, tolerant of frost and freezes, high production in a small area, extended growing and harvest period. Early maturing--most varieties are harvested 60-80 days from sowing. And, kids eat them in spite of their being nutritious!
- Carrots are an excellent source of the deep yellow carotenoids that produce vitamin A. They are also a good source of magnesium, potassium, vitamins C and B complex, and a form of calcium that is easily absorbed by the body.
- **BIGGEST CHALLENGE:** \*\*Establishment (seed germination/emergence). See below
- **LOCATION:** Full sun but tolerates some shade and may prefer shade during warm days.
- **SOILS:** Deep, loose, well-drained sandy or loamy with a pH of 6.3-6.8
- **TIME OF SEEDING:** In Central Florida, can sow between August and March **BUT** October is best month for production as high temperatures and heavy rains in August/September may complicate establishment.
- **\*\*ESTABLISHMENT:** To ensure good germination, soil T<sup>o</sup> should be above 61°. Seeds need constant soil moisture and light (depending on variety) to germinate. Therefore, before seeding, water the soil well so the soil is well-moistened at the time of sowing. Sow seeds in rows 6-10" apart and about 1" apart in the rows. Cover the seed no more than 1/8-1/4" deep with a fine soil. Place a wet burlap bag or wet straw over the sown area in order to maintain high humidity and moisture around the seeds. Water daily to keep soil surface constantly moist. Germination may take 7 to 20 days. Remove burlap bag or straw when seedlings have emerged.
- **THINNING:** When 1" tall, thin to 2-3" between seedlings.
- **FERTILIZER:** Carrots require low levels of nitrogen (N), moderate phosphate (P) and high potash (K) for good edible root production. When established on a soil with high organic matter, little or no N fertilizer will be needed.
- At last soil preparation, broadcast about one-half (½) lb of 6-6-6 with micro-nutrients on a 4' x 8' bed and incorporate into soil. When the carrot tops reach 3-4" tall, fertilize with a 0-10-10 or 5-15-15 or similar fertilizer low in N and higher in P and K. Fertilize again when 6-8" tall. Do not fertilize again with N as over-fertilizing will stimulate foliage growth at the expense of root growth and may cause forked roots. Too much nitrogen may also cause the carrots to grow hairy little roots all up and down the carrot. P and K encourages more root development.
  - **Warning:** Do not give carrots too much nitrogen fertilizer.
- **IRRIGATION/WATERING:** Keep soil evenly moist. Use mulch to help maintain soil moisture and prevent weeds.  
**Warning:** Over-watering can cause leaching losses of N and K resulting in less production.
- **PESTS:** Alternaria blight. Control by 3-year rotation; use of copper fungicides; grow resistant hybrids such as Apache, Choctaw, Navajo or Top Notch.
- **Wireworms:** if planted after turf.