Carrots can be grown all year round. They will give a good yield from a small area if you space them close together. Few vegetables can match their versatility in the kitchen.

Carrots need deep, loose soil to grow long, so try short-rooted varieties if your ground is stony or heavy. You can also grow them in containers. Carrots are drought-resistant and need very little watering.

Did You Know?

Originally, carrots were purple! Orange carrots were introduced by patriotic Dutch farmers, as orange appeared on their national flag. Over time, these became the norm. You can still buy purple carrots, but they are orange on the inside.

Sowing

- Prepare the ground well in autumn – [here is a guide]
- Sow 1cm deep and 3cm apart in rows 15cm apart
- Sow thinly to avoid having to thin out later (the aroma of the crushed foliage when thinning out can attract the dreaded carrot fly)
- If you do need to thin, do so once the seedlings start to appear to a final distance of 5-8cm apart
- Destroy the thinnings by burning or burying them

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How to Grow Your Own Carrots

Growing

- Keep weeds down in the early stages. Once carrots are established, their leafy tops will block out sunlight to annual weeds
- Carrots like the heat and will need little water
- However, if the foliage starts to wilt, water thoroughly every 10-14 days to keep the ground damp.
- But beware overloading dry soil with too much water – it can cause the vegetables to split

David’s Top Tip

Growing onions next to carrots can deter carrot fly but only while onions are in active growth. For this to work you need around four rows of onions for each row of carrots

Harvesting

- Carrots are generally ready to harvest 12-16 weeks after sowing
- Pull the roots while they are still young, as larger roots tend not to have as much flavour
- Pull up with your hands or use a fork if the soil is hard
- To store carrots, lift and remove surface dirt. Cut the leaves to 1cm from the top and place in a box between layers of dry sand, so the carrots are not touching

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