

Harvest of
the Month
at Home

Carrots

Did You Know

- The carrot is a root vegetable of the Apiaceae family. The edible part of a carrot is known as a taproot.
- Carrots originated in central Asia over a thousand years ago. The original carrots were purple to black in color and much woodier in texture. Europeans started enjoying carrots as a staple food in the 13th century.
- Today carrots come in many colors including purple, black, yellow, orange, red, and white and also range in size from a round 2-inch carrot to a slender 3-foot carrot!
- The average person eats 17 pounds of carrots per year. How many pounds of carrots do you eat?
- Baby-cut carrots are made from full-grown, thin carrots by peeling and cutting them to the desired size and shape. True baby carrots are harvested early and actually look like miniature carrots.
- Carrots are well known for containing high amounts of beta carotene, an antioxidant which is a form of vitamin A. Beta carotene is important for eyesight, healthy skin, and growing bodies. It may also help reduce chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease. Beta carotene was first discovered in carrots, therefore its name came from carrots. Carrots are also a source of vitamin C and potassium, and like most vegetables, a source of fiber.



Grow Your Own

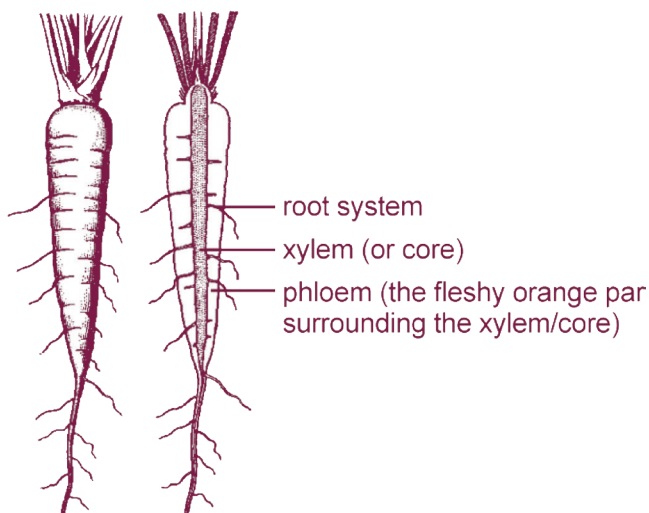
Plant carrot seeds directly in the garden four weeks before the last frost. Some shorter varieties are suitable to container planting. Carrot seeds are small and can be difficult for children to evenly space when planting. Seed tape, on which carrot seeds are glued, can be helpful for planting carrots with kids. Carrots are a biennial plant. In the first year, the plant forms the taproot, which we eat, and foliage. In the second year, the plant grows larger foliage, flowers, and seeds. Consider leaving a carrot over winter to see the carrot's interesting flower the second summer.

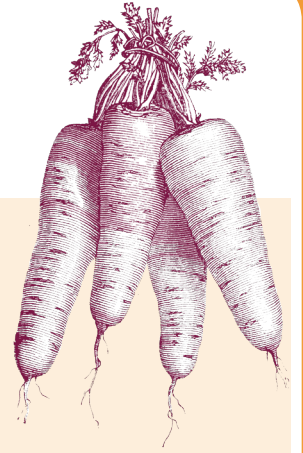
Buying Tips

Carrots are usually sold without the stems and leaves to reduce moisture loss. If carrots still have tops, avoid carrots with wilted or brown tops. Select carrots that are firm and bright. Larger carrots generally have a tougher texture, but are great for soups and recipes in which the carrots are cooked. Store carrots in the refrigerator in a perforated plastic bag or wrapped in a paper towel for 1-3 weeks. Avoid storing carrots near items that produce ethylene gas like apples or potatoes. Carrots lose moisture through their leafy green tops, so remove the tops before storing.

Cooking

Carrots are excellent eaten raw or cooked. Grate raw carrots for salads, slaw, or to add to sandwiches. Roasted carrots are also fantastic and easy to make. Cut carrots into fries or 1/4 inch – 1/2 inch sections. Toss with olive oil, salt, and desired seasonings. Spread on baking sheet and roast at 400°F for 20-30 minutes or until crisp.





Recipes

Carrot Salad

This easy salad is like a cross between a slaw and a pickle. It makes a nice, simple snack or side dish, but it's also great in a sandwich or taco or on a burger. This is a versatile recipe—substitute lemon juice and zest for the lime or use vinegar. Also, you can use parsley or cilantro instead of mint.

Source: *Chop Chop* (www.chopchopmag.org/recipes)

Servings

4

Ingredients

- 3 large carrots, scrubbed or peeled
- Juice of one lime and grated zest of half a lime
- 1 tsp honey
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh mint leaves
- 1/3 cup roasted sunflower seeds or peanuts (optional)
- 1/2 tsp salt

Preparation

1. Grate the carrots on the large holes of a box grater.
2. Stir in the lime juice and zest, honey, salt, mint, and peanuts. Taste the salad. Do you think it needs more lime? Mint? Honey? Salt? If so, add it, and taste again.
3. Serve right away or store, covered in the refrigerator, up to 3 days.

Crispy Carrot Fries

In the mood for fries? Instead of the potato kind, try these. Carrots are tasty and quite nutritious!

Source: *Chop Chop*
(www.chopchopmag.org/recipes)

Servings

4

Ingredients

- 6 carrots (about 1 lb), well scrubbed but not peeled
- 1 tsp olive or canola oil
- 1/2 tsp salt

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Cut carrots into thirds. Cut the thinnest end into two spears. Cut the two thicker parts into four spears each so that you get approximately ten carrot spears from each carrot (depending on the size of carrot).
3. Put the spears on the baking sheet, add the oil and salt and, using clean hands, rub the oil and salt on the carrot pieces until they are all lightly coated with oil.
4. Transfer the baking sheet to the oven and bake until the carrots are tender and golden brown, about 30 minutes.
5. Serve right away.

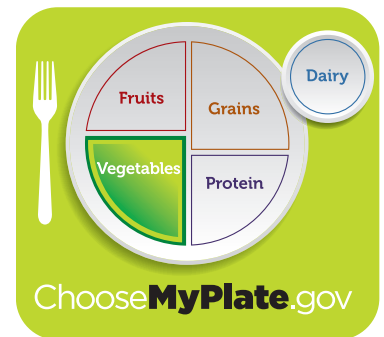
Book Nook

- Tops and Bottoms*, by Janet Stevens
- Carrots Grow Underground*, by Mari Schuh
- The Giant Carrot*, by Jan Peck
- Carrots*, by Inez Snyder
- Oliver's Vegetables*, by Vivian French



Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit:
www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.



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The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. This program is a collaboration between the Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, and FoodCorps Montana. More information and resources are available at: www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.

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