

## Carrot

Kareti (Fr.)

*Daucus carota v. sativus*

Apiaceae family

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### ECHO Plant Information Sheet

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**Origin** – Carrots have been a cultivated crop in Western Asia since the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. They were originally used only medicinally. In general, carrots are a crop for temperate climates but the Uberlandia variety responds to a warm climate and will set seeds. The Danvers variety, a 60-70 day variety performs well, in heavy, clay soils. Choctaw's season is shorter but it performs better under adverse variations of rainfall and temperature.

**Uses** – The sweet roots are eaten either raw or cooked though all parts of the carrot plant are edible. In Java, the tops are food for humans. Tops and roots can be fed to small livestock.

**Cultivation** – Tiny carrot seeds germinate best in soil that is 10-30° C (50-85°F), rather early in a cool season. Plant in light, well-drained soil or in raised ridges to allow the large root to expand and lengthen. Keep early weeds under control and provide a steady supply of moisture. In heavy, clay soil, a board may be laid over the row until most seeds have germinated. Rapid growth makes carrots taste better and have better texture. Plant 3-4 seeds every 5 cm. (2") at a depth of 1 cm. (½ ") The seeds of a fast growing root crop like radishes can be mixed with carrot seeds. As radishes are harvested, the carrots are thinned out. In the tropics, light afternoon shade may be needed.

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90-110 days after planting. This harvested vegetable will still be edible after several months if kept at .5°C (33°F). After a frost, carrots may be left in the ground with a covering of straw and harvested before the ground freezes.

**Pests and Diseases** – Because celery is of the same family as carrots, do not follow one crop with another as they are susceptible to the same diseases and pests. Alternaria blight will defoliate carrots in hot, humid weather. Bacterial soft rot results from poor drainage. If evidence of these diseases or rootknot nematode is present, before another season's crop is planted, it would be wise to rotate the carrot crop to a new location. Digging organic matter into the soil and planting on ridges or raised beds may reduce damage from nematodes.

**Cooking and Nutrition** – Because carrots contain a high amount of carotene, which is converted in the human body into Vitamin A, it is a very valuable crop for a family to grow in their garden. Vitamin A is critical for the health of eyes and skin at almost any age. When eaten raw, the greatest amount of carotene is retained because vitamin A is soluble in water and may be discarded in the cooking water. The roots can be made into a juice, a sweet syrup, or a fermented drink. Flour is made from the dried pounded roots, or tops and roots can be added to soups or stews.

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