



URI COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES (CELS) OUTREACH CENTER

3 East Alumni Avenue  
Kingston, Rhode Island 02881

**For more information:**

**Call:**

In RI: URI MGA Hotline  
1-800-448-1011  
Mon.-Thurs. 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

In MA and CT: 401-874-2900

Outside New England please contact Cooperative Extension in your county.

**Websites:**

URI Master Gardener Association  
[www.urimga.org](http://www.urimga.org)

CELS Outreach Center  
[www.uri.edu/cels/ceo](http://www.uri.edu/cels/ceo)

## CARROTS

Because they are easy to grow and a wonderful source of Vitamin A, carrots make an excellent crop for the home garden. The new varieties are easy to grow and make a great addition to children's gardens as well.

### Climate Requirements

The carrot is a hardy, cool season crop that can be planted in the garden as soon as the soil can be prepared in the spring. Carrots require relatively large amounts of moisture and are not tolerant of drought. Prolonged hot weather in the later stages of development may retard growth and result in an undesirable strong flavor and coarseness in the roots. Prolonged cooler temperatures, however (below 55°F), tend to make the roots longer, more slender and paler in color than expected. The best temperature for highest quality roots is between 60 and 70°F.

### Soils

Carrot plants thrive in deep, loose, well-drained soil. Avoid stony, cloddy or trash-laden soils that will increase the incidence of root defects. Raised beds, which usually have loose soil and receive little compaction from foot traffic, are ideal for growing carrots. Carrots grown on heavy soils may produce considerable leaf growth and forked roots. Carrot plants do not grow well in strongly acidic soils – a pH of 6.0 to 6.8 should be maintained for best results.

### Fertilizers

Fertilizers and lime are best applied to soils for carrot production using soil test results as a guide. Carrots require large amounts of plant nutrient elements, particularly potassium, for good production. A fertilizer with the ratio of 1-2-2 such as a 5-10-10 analysis would be appropriate at the time of seeding and again when tops are 3 to 4 inches tall and 6 to 8 inches tall. Too much manure and fertilizer applied just before seeding can result in forked roots.

### Establishing the Planting

Seed carrots into a well-prepared soil early in the spring at a depth of 1/4 inch in rows spaced at least 12 to 18 inches apart. It is important to avoid crusting of the soil around the seed bed: cover the seed with vermiculite or fine compost and keep the soil

PESTICIDES ARE POISONOUS!! Read and follow all safety precautions on labels. Handle carefully and store in original containers out of reach of children, pets, or livestock. Dispose of empty containers immediately, in a safe manner and place. Pesticides should never be stored with foods or in areas where people eat.

When trade names are used for identification, no product endorsement is implied, nor is discrimination intended against similar materials. Be sure that the pesticide that you wish to use is registered in the state of use.

The user of this information assumes all risk for personal injury or property damage.

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**Note:** The Hotline is open Monday—Thursday, 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. from March 1 to November 1.

evenly moist until the seedlings have emerged. After the seedlings have emerged, thin to 1 inch apart. When the tops of the carrots grow thicker, thin to about 2 to 3 inches apart. Some seed companies offer pelletized seed, making the seeds easier to plant and thin.

### **Cultural Practices**

- Mulch to help conserve moisture and suppress weed growth.
- Cultivation, if necessary, should be shallow in order to avoid root injury.
- Carrots require an evenly-distributed and plentiful soil moisture supply throughout the growing season. Avoid too much moisture towards the end of the season, as this will cause roots to crack.
- If orange crowns appear at the soil level as the plants mature mulch with soil or compost in order to avoid the greening of these tops in the sun.

Potential pest and disease problems include leafhoppers, wireworms, carrot rust worm larvae, aster yellow, leaf spot, and soft rot.

### **Harvesting and Storage**

Harvest can begin when carrots are finger size. In general, the smaller carrots are juicier and more tender. The entire crop does not have to be harvested at one time. Carrots can remain in the soil until you are ready to use them and they will last until winter in the soil if mulched well. Store at temperatures near freezing in a moist environment.

*Adapted from Pamela J. Bennett, Ohio State University Extension, 2000*