VEGETABLES · A SUNNY PATIO DURING A COOL GROWING SPELL

Let's grow carrot.

Daucus carota subsp. sativus

This plan is for **Short 'n Sweet carrot; direct-sown short roots**

Nine little carrots, grown right where you sow them.

12 × 12 × 12 in. **18 seeds → 9 carrots**

Before you start

Sow the final planter directly for a cool spring or fall growing period. Keep the seed layer moist and allow up to 3 weeks for emergence.

By jennyzhuang

Sources checked September 26, 2026 View sources



LIGHT

A sunny spot

Aim for 6–8 hours of sun.



WATER

Even moisture

Keep seeds damp and avoid big wet-to-dry swings as roots grow.



FEEDING

Usually no extra to start

Fresh enriched mix first; extra nitrogen is not a shortcut to bigger roots.

BEFORE YOU START

Your little kit.

- ✓ One draining square planter about 12 inches wide, long, and deep
- ✓ Fresh potting mix, a gentle watering can, and small scissors
- ✓ 18 Short 'n Sweet carrot seeds

THE SOIL

Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US, with starter nutrients; check your bag for additional-feeding directions)

Start with what's on this list. Add plant food only when the feeding section says it's needed.

YOUR SIMPLE GROWING PLAN

One pot. Here's the plan.

A sunny patio during a cool growing spell. Start with **seeds**.

THE POT

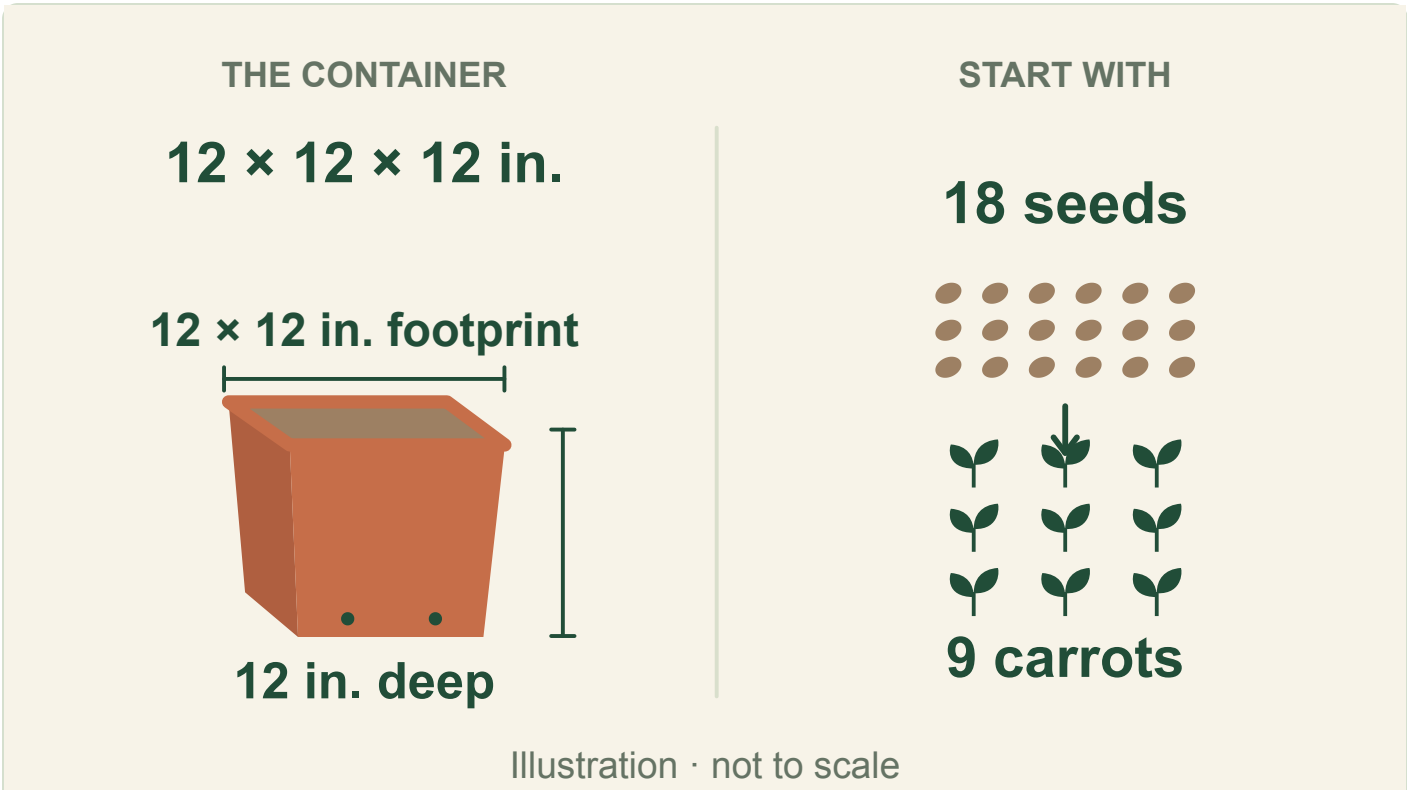
12 × 12 × 12 in.

A draining square planter, 12 inches deep. The 3 × 3 grid is for short roots; sow directly into this final container.

HOW MANY

18 seeds → 9 carrots

Two seeds at each of 9 spots, with 3 inches between spots.



12 × 12 × 12 in. · 18 seeds → 9 carrots A draining square planter, 12 inches deep. The 3 × 3 grid is for short roots; sow directly into this final container. Two seeds at each of 9 spots, with 3 inches between spots. Original illustration; not to scale.

01

Prepare a soft seed surface

Fill with damp potting mix and remove large hard chunks from the sowing area. Leave about an inch below the rim.

02

Make a nine-spot grid

Mark a centered 3 × 3 grid, with spots 3 inches apart. Sow 2 seeds at each spot, ¼ inch deep.

03

Keep nine seedlings

Keep the shallow seeded layer moist while waiting for sprouts. When seedlings are about 2–3 inches tall, snip extras at soil level and keep one per spot. If one spot stays empty, sow it again rather than moving a carrot seedling into it.

04

Pull one to check

Near the packet's harvest date, moisten and loosen the mix around one root. Pull gently to check its size before harvesting the rest.

Help with the setup: drainage holes and saucers · potting mix vs. garden soil.

Other ways to start

Use seed tape or pelleted seed

Choose a short-rooted carrot suited to containers and sow it directly in the final planter. Arrange nine final positions about 3 inches apart and follow that packet's sowing directions. Do not transplant the extras; disturbed taproots can become misshapen.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

Water & fertilizer at a glance.

WATER WHEN

Keep the seeded layer damp. After emergence, water as the top ½–1 inch starts drying, keeping deeper mix evenly moist; drain.

FERTILIZER

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

AMOUNT

1 tablespoon in 1 US gallon of water

WHAT THAT AMOUNT COVERS

Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on.

HOW OFTEN TO FEED

One conditional top-up; reassess before feeding again. No automatic weekly schedule.

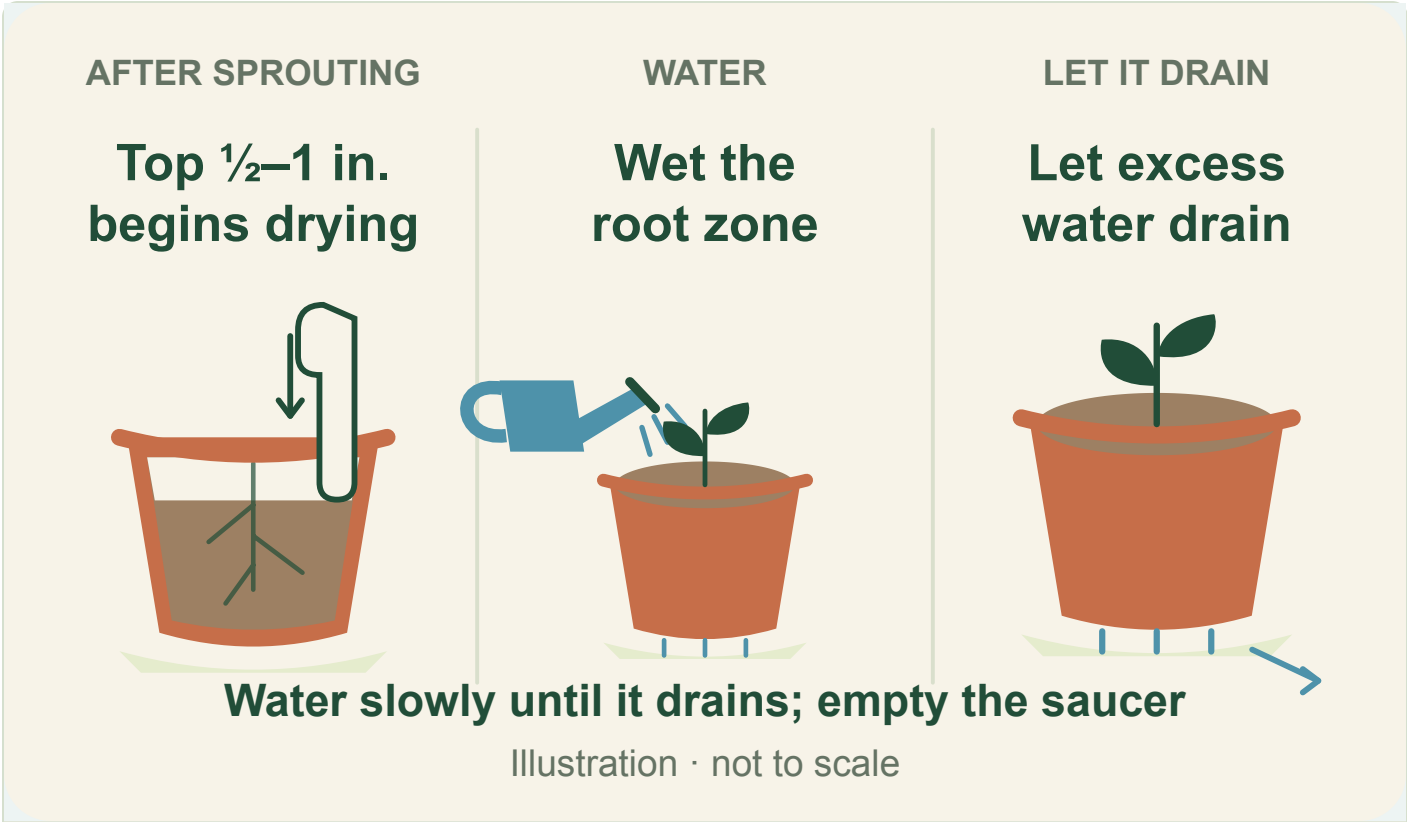
WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

Only if the mix bag calls for more food and the crop is still growing. Check light, drainage and crowding before treating pale leaves as a shortage.

01 / EVERYDAY CARE

When to water.

Check each morning. Until sprouts appear, keep the shallow seeded layer consistently damp with gentle watering. Afterward, water when the top ½–1 inch begins drying, keeping deeper mix evenly moist. Let excess drain. Repeated drought followed by a big soaking can contribute to cracked roots.



Check before watering. Keep the seeded layer damp. After emergence, water as the top ½–1 inch starts drying, keeping deeper mix evenly moist; drain. Original illustration; not to scale.

> **The easy rule**
>
> Check first. Water only when the plant needs it.

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02 / PLANT FOOD

Exactly what to feed it.

Add no extra fertilizer at sowing in the fresh enriched mix listed here. Check the purchased bag for when additional food is due; do not assume it always lasts two months. Carrots have a light to moderate nutrient requirement, and too much nitrogen can favor foliage over roots.



1 tablespoon in 1 US gallon of water Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on. One conditional top-up; reassess before feeding again. No automatic weekly schedule. Only if the mix bag calls for more food and the crop is still growing. Check light, drainage and crowding before treating pale leaves as a shortage. Original illustration; not to scale.

US PRODUCT REFERENCE



Miracle-Gro

Water Soluble All Purpose

24-8-16

Soluble: mix into water

Check the official US product ↗

Illustrated reference; check the manufacturer's current packaging and US label.

ONLY IF MORE FOOD IS DUE

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

If the bag calls for additional food and the crop is still growing, an optional top-up is 1 level tablespoon of Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16) in 1 US gallon of water. Apply only enough to wet the planter and drain. The gallon is a mixing batch, not a pot dose. Reassess before feeding again; do not add a weekly routine or stack full-rate fertilizers. Pale leaves alone do not diagnose a shortage: check drainage, light and crowding first.

Check the manufacturer's product page ↗

The dilution below is the named product's outdoor label rate. It is not evidence that carrots need frequent feeding or that extra nitrogen improves root size.

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03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Sprouting and harvest timing

Allow up to 3 weeks for seedlings to appear. Burpee lists Short 'n Sweet at about 68 days to maturity with roots around 4 inches long. Treat that date as a reminder to check a test root, not a guaranteed harvest deadline. Cool conditions can slow progress.

Choose a cool sowing window

A cool spring or fall growing period is the simple default. Keep the seed surface from drying out, especially if sowing for fall during hot weather. Ask local Extension for planting windows.

For regional planting windows, find your local Cooperative Extension office ↗.

Something looking off?

Why have the seeds not come up?

Check the sowing date before starting over: emergence can take up to 3 weeks. A dry or hard surface can prevent tiny seedlings from emerging. Keep the seed layer gently moist without digging it up. If the packet's expected window has passed and gaps remain, try fresh seed in those spots; fertilizer will not restart dead seed.

Why are there big leaves but tiny roots?

Check crowding first: retain just one carrot per spot. Extra nitrogen can also favor leaves, so do not add more fertilizer automatically.

Can I regrow a carrot from its cut-off top?

A carrot top can grow more foliage, but it will not make a replacement edible taproot. Sow a fresh seed for another carrot.

Choosing short roots and avoiding damage

Choose a short-rooted cultivar

Short 'n Sweet is the named example. Our nine-position layout uses 3-inch spacing within Extension guidance; it is a simple container adaptation, not a promised yield. Another short variety needs its own packet's depth and maturity checks. Long-rooted types need a different plan.

Understand why roots fork or split

Obstacles and damaged young roots can cause forking; uneven moisture can contribute to cracking. Existing roots will not straighten, but smoother mix and steadier care help the next crop.

Help with your next step.

Choose mix for a container

Start with light potting mix and an unobstructed root space, rather than hard garden soil.

Compare beginner edible projects

Compare another seed-grown vegetable with a ready-rooted herb before buying supplies.

BEHIND THIS GUIDE

Where the advice comes from.

Plant care is based on the sources below. Planting layouts and beginner routines combine that guidance into one practical plan; they are editorial choices, not results from a Plant Care Steps growing trial.

- Burpee: Short 'n Sweet root size and maturity ↗
  https://www.burpee.com/products/carrot-short-n-sweet-prod000639
- University of Maryland: carrot sowing, thinning, and nutrition ↗
  https://extension.umd.edu/resource/growing-carrots-home-garden
- University of Minnesota: carrot root development and problems ↗
  https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/growing-carrots-and-parsnips
- Illinois Extension: vegetable container spacing ↗
  https://extension.illinois.edu/container-gardens/growing-vegetables-containers
- Oregon State: why carrot tops do not regrow taproots ↗
  https://extension.oregonstate.edu/ask-extension/featured/can-i-regrow-carrots-planting-tops
- Manufacturer: starter feed in the named potting mix ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/potting-mix/miracle-gro-organic-potting-mix/78951430.html
- Manufacturer: US fertilizer formula and application directions ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/plant-food-and-care/miracle-gro-water-soluble-all-purpose-plant-food.html
- University of Maryland: container moisture and nutrition ↗
  https://extension.umd.edu/resource/growing-vegetables-containers-and-salad-tables

Something needs updating? Suggest a correction

Published September 23, 2026 · Updated September 26, 2026

Compiled with AI assistance. These first-edition guides have not yet had an independent horticultural review. Read our editorial approach.