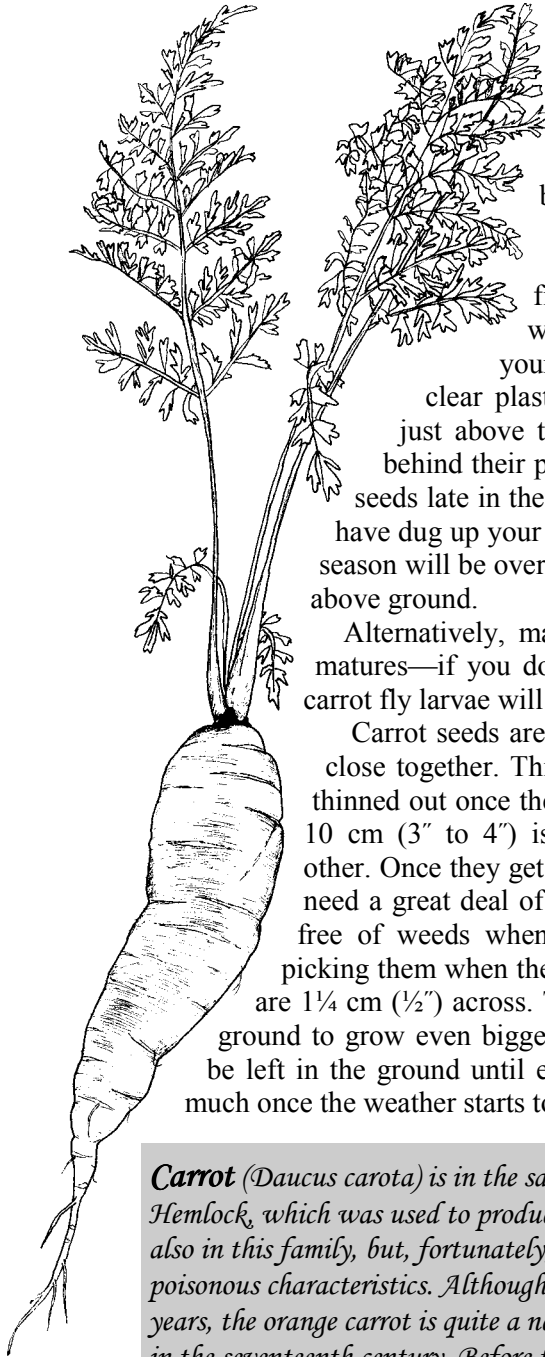


Sow in spring and summer

CARROTS



Carrot fly poses the biggest problem to anyone who wants to grow carrots. They lay their eggs on the young carrot and when the eggs hatch, the larvae burrow their way through the developing carrot root until it becomes more or less useless.

Possible solutions include covering your plants with enviromesh (a sort of fibrous material that lets in the light and water but not carrot fly); surrounding your plants with a two-foot high fence of clear plastic sheeting (the carrot flies fly along just above the ground and don't see your carrots behind their protective shield); or planting the carrot seeds late in the season (perhaps in the area where you have dug up your potatoes) in the hope that the carrot fly season will be over by the time the carrot seedlings appear above ground.

Alternatively, make sure that you eat your crop as it matures—if you do not let the carrots grow too big, the carrot fly larvae will not have time to hatch.

Carrot seeds are very small and have to be sown quite close together. This means that the seedlings have to be thinned out once they start to grow—one carrot every 7 to 10 cm (3" to 4") is enough, otherwise they crowd each other. Once they get going, carrots grow rapidly and do not need a great deal of attention. You just have to keep them free of weeds when the plants are small. You can start picking them when the carrot tops showing above the ground are 1¼ cm (½") across. This allows those that you leave in the ground to grow even bigger. Carrots are normally quite happy to be left in the ground until early winter, although they don't grow much once the weather starts to get cold.

Carrot (*Daucus carota*) is in the same family as parsnip, celery and parsley. Hemlock, which was used to produce the notorious poison taken by Socrates, is also in this family, but, fortunately, carrot does not have any of its relative's poisonous characteristics. Although carrots have been grown for thousands of years, the orange carrot is quite a new invention. It was developed in Holland in the seventeenth century. Before that, white, red, yellow, purple and crimson carrots were grown throughout Europe, Asia and the Far East.