Carrots are an excellent crop for school gardens. Students love pulling carrots out of the ground, and their familiar flavor and appearance makes it very easy to attract even the most stubborn students to try vegetables from the garden.

When to Grow

Carrots are a cool season crop that can be planted in Georgia in early fall and early spring. Sow seeds any time between mid-February and the end of April for a summer crop, or plant in August through early September for a fall crop. Carrots germinate best when temperatures are 50° F–70° F.

Where to Grow

Carrots grow well in the ground or raised beds, and some can even be grown in containers. Regardless of where they are grown, they grow best in well-drained and loose soil.

Carrots and other root vegetables grow best with at least 6 hours of sunlight a day.

Planting

Prepare the soil for planting carrots by loosening it to a depth of about 8 inches (deeper if longer carrots are being grown). Break up any large chunks of clay and remove any rocks.

Plant carrots in rows about ¼–½ inch deep and 12 –18 inches apart. Since carrot seeds are so small, it is easiest to slowly pour seeds out of the packet into the rows. Mixing carrot seeds with radish seeds can be an easy way to mark where the carrots have been planted—carrots can take a long time to emerge (7–21 days) while the radishes will sprout earlier (3–4 days). Once the carrot sprouts have reached about 4 inches in height, thin the carrots to every 2 inches.

For more information, visit georgiaorganics.org/for-schools/rooting-for-carrots. For questions, contact us at 678-702-0400 or emilycd@georgiaorganics.org.
Cover the seeds with a thin layer of soil and water lightly (two to three seconds max). Keep the soil moist but not soggy to encourage germination.

Carrots grow best direct-seeded as transplanting can damage their sensitive roots.

**Plant Care**

Carrots should be grown with adequate and even moisture. Uneven moisture can lead to a woody texture and bitter flavor. Carrots also grow best in temperatures are between 50° F–70° F, and hotter temperatures can make carrots have less than desirable texture and flavor.

Overwatering can lead to splitting. To make sure that the soil is adequately watered, clump a bit of dirt up and squeeze. If it is dry and falls apart immediately, then it is time to water. If more than a trickle of water comes out, then wait for the soil to dry out before watering again.

Keep the carrot bed weed-free to control pests and disease.

** Harvesting **

The best guideline for harvesting carrots is the number of days to maturity, usually found on the seed packet. Once the appropriate amount of time has elapsed, either brush off the tops of the carrot to expose the shoulder or simply stick your finger all the way in the ground directly next to the carrot to feel if it’s developed. Generally, carrots are ready when shoulders are ¾–1 inch in diameter, although carrots can be harvested at any size for use. Grasp the carrot-tops right near the shoulder and pull. It may help to loosen the soil with a little to make them easier to pull up and prevent them from breaking.

For more information, visit georgiaorganics.org/for-schools/rooting-for-carrots. For questions, contact us at 678-702-0400 or emilycd@georgiaorganics.org.