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Gold grows in the garden

One of the easiest and most popular vegetables to grow is the carrot. The most difficult thing about them might be remembering what the different variety types mean.

- **IMPERATOR** carrots like Gold Pak and Tendersweet are long and tapered. This is the kind of carrot you will most often find at the supermarket.

- **NANTES** carrots are more blunt and cylindrical.

- **DANVERS** carrots are broader at the shoulder and somewhat shorter.

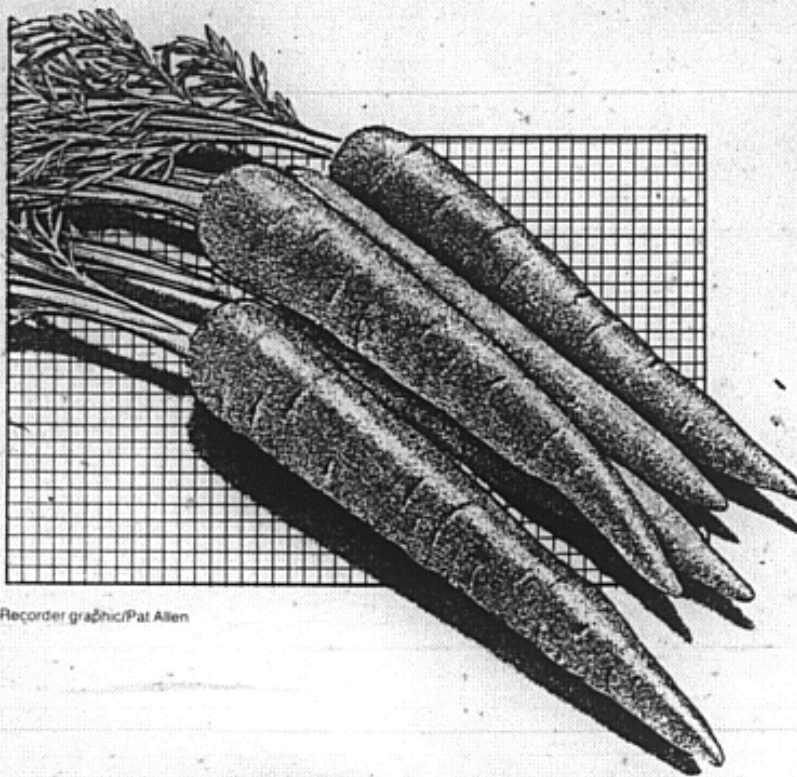
- **CHANTENAY** carrots are still broader at the shoulder and shorter.

- There are even some novelty carrots like **KUNDULUS** that are round, and what some people call baby carrots like **AMSTEL** that are only four inches long at maturity.

One of the things hybridizers have been working on is making carrots super nutritious. With most varieties a single carrot will provide you the minimum daily allowance of vitamin A, but A-plus is a variety that gives you 75% more than that. It's a nutritional bonanza - and it tastes good too. The roots are about eight inches long with a deep color that indicates a high level of beta carotene.

One of the reasons I have made sure to eat a raw carrot a day is that it was suggested that carrots help lower your blood cholesterol level. A doctor I met said that would only be true if you ate a carrot instead of a hot fudge sundae. I wonder if the hybridizers could work on a carrot that would help suppress your appetite for hot fudge sundaes.

What all carrots have in common is a crisp texture and good flavor. They don't require a terribly rich soil; in fact you should never manure the garden just before planting carrots, although you could till in dried blood, rock phosphate and wood ashes or lime at the time of



Recorder graphic/Pat Allen

Pat
Leuchtman

Between
The Rows



planting.

Carrots can be planted as early in the spring as you can get into the garden. That is why I try to have at least one bed all tilled and prepared in the fall so that in April, when the garden has dried out a little and can

by keeping the seed bed moist. One of the main causes of failure is allowing the soil to develop a hard crust, which often happens when there are alternating periods of rain and drought. Carrot seeds are very fine and they need to sprout without being hindered.

You may have to thin your seedlings. If you can wait until these fingerlings are at least big enough to be eaten in a salad you'll get a real bonus. The flavor will not be as fully developed, but they'll be tender and sweet.

Most carrots mature in about 70 days. The nice thing is that they don't demand instant harvest. They can stay in the ground until you are ready to do something with them.

Naturally you can freeze or can carrots, but I like them because they are so easy to store with no processing at all. I have stored them in a barrel of damp sand and I have stored them in damp sawdust in plastic garbage bags. I have even put them in the plastic bags that bread is sold in. I make sure the bag has a couple of holes and I put the filled bag on wire shelves so there is some air circulation and that has worked as well. What has been most important is the fact that I have a dirt cellar that is damp with temperatures in the 40s all winter long.

I have not had any luck leaving carrots in the garden over the winter under a heavy mulch. When I have gone out in the earliest spring looking for some sweet fresh carrots I have found that the mice had the same idea and beat me to it.

However you store them and whether you cook them plain, or put them into soup or cake, you'll feel as rich as Croesus with your carrot harvest.

no longer be described as mud, I go out and plant spinach, lettuce and carrots. However, carrots can be planted periodically through mid-July in my garden. This helps stagger the harvest.

I plant my carrots in blocks or wide rows. The space is tilled to a depth of at least eight inches and I remove all the rocks. You'd think after eight summers of gardening in the same spot I'd have all the rocks removed, but no such luck.

If your soil is extremely heavy I'd recommend incorporating some peat moss and choose a shorter variety. Get your carrots off to a good start