

Cultivating Carrots

Learning what farmers do, conducting an experiment, following a multistep procedure (RST.6–8.3)

Today's kids can get out of touch with where their food comes from—and how much work goes into producing it. What better way for students to understand that than to grow a crop themselves—carrots! You'll need several 10-inch-deep containers with drainage holes (one for each group), soil, carrot seeds, and water. Carrots will take 60 to 70 days to mature, so be sure to plan ahead to avoid holiday breaks when starting this activity. Divide students into small groups and provide the materials needed plus a copy of the planting instructions below. Assign each group to carefully follow the directions as they cultivate their carrots.



1. Fill the container three-quarters full of soil. Wet the soil thoroughly.
2. Sprinkle carrot seeds on top of the soil; lightly cover with about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of dirt.
3. For seeds to grow successfully, they'll need at least six hours of sunlight a day in a room that's 60 to 70 degrees. Water if the top 4 inches of the soil is dry.
4. Once your carrot tops are about 2 inches tall, thin your plants so there's an inch between each.
5. When the plants are 4 inches high, add fertilizer designed for vegetables. Follow the package directions and repeat as directed. (Note: Always wash your hands after handling dirt or fertilizer.)
6. Thin the plants again when you start to see orange roots. Allow 3 inches between each plant.
7. It's harvest time! Pick the carrots when they're about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide and when you can see the top of the carrot sticking out of the soil.
8. Process the carrots by peeling and cooking them. For example, you could make carrot soup, carrot juice, or even pickled carrots! (Curious about pickled carrots? Find out more at http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can6b_pickle.html.)

As students care for their plants, have them think about the work involved with cultivating a large crop. By harvest time, they'll understand more about what's involved with bringing food from farm to fork!



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