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Elizabeth McCorquodale

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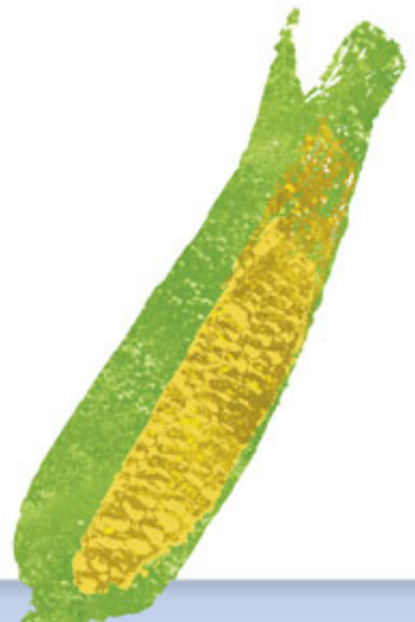
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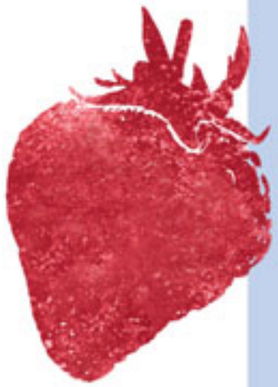
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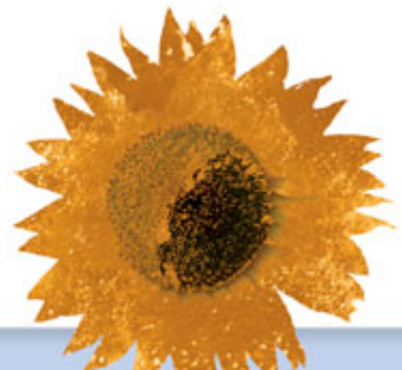
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INTRODUCTION

There is something very special about growing plants. It's a little bit like magic, and that makes you, the gardener, the magician. Take one little seed, add some soil, water, warmth and sunlight and it changes into a plant. The hard seed coating splits open and from that tiny case, leaves and stem shoot up and grow. A flower unfolds and a fruit swells and ripens. Now that is real magic.

To grow up healthy and happy all plants need the right sort of soil and the right amount of sun, warmth and water. The trick of being a good gardener is to give your plants what they want most. Look at the symbols in the "know it all" section at the bottom of each project page to help you give your plants the best conditions.



SOWING TO HARVEST TIME



HOW MUCH SUN



HOW MUCH WATER



COMPANION PLANTS



PESTS



DISTANCE BETWEEN PLANTS



GERMINATION TIME

Have carrots always been orange? See page 95.

CARROTS

Carrots are easy-going and not at all fussy as long as the soil is crumbly and light. Given the right conditions they can grow super-quick to give crunchy slim roots for you to pull in only six to eight weeks! And carrots are hardy and not afraid of a bit of bad weather so they can be planted and placed outside right away.

You will need:

- **A container at least 12" (3 metres) wide and deep**
- **Soil**
- **Label and waterproof pen**
- **Seeds**



1 Choose your container—a bag, a box, a basket… what will it be? Prepare your label.

2 Fill with soil and kitchen compost to 1" (3 cm) of the rim of your container and water it well. Now sprinkle seeds thinly over the surface of the soil—remember each of those seeds is going to grow into a carrot so give them some room to develop. Sprinkle ¼" (0.5 cm) of soil on top of your seeds and water lightly.

3 Put your container in a sunny, sheltered spot and water when the surface of the compost dries out—in very hot or windy weather this may be twice a day. But only water if it's needed!

4 After several days the first leaves will appear and then it is time to start feeding your carrots with a weak plant food. Keep an eye on your carrots, feeding them weekly and watering them as necessary.

5 After six weeks, check to see if your carrots are ready by pulling out one or two. Grasp the feathery leaves down by the soil and pull gently.

Growing carrots in the garden is just as easy… just give them a good 'root run' and feed and water them every now and then. Prepare the soil by digging very deep. Heavy, hard to dig soils can be improved by adding lots of well rotted kitchen compost… and always remember to stay off heavy soils when they are wet. Carrots love an easy, loose soil to grow in; the long tap roots that we eat will grow short and dumpy if the soil is too hard and stony. Plant your carrots far enough apart so that you don't have to thin them. See the "know it all" section below. The main carrot pest, the carrot root fly, can smell the carrot seedlings when they are being pulled up. No thinning means fewer carrot root flies. Carrot root flies only fly a few inches above the ground so it's easy to stop them getting to your crop by putting something in their way. Try a fleecy barrier or a row of chives.

If you have somewhere warm and very bright you can even grow baby carrots inside in the middle of Winter.





How do you turn soup into gold? Add 24 carrots!

400 years ago elegant ladies were advised to wear carrot fronds in their hats for decoration.





Rooty Tooty Soup p79



Orangey Carrot Muffins p79



Carroty Wraps p79



Can carrots really make you see in the dark or is this just an old wartime tale? See page 95.















PROJECTS

SPROUTING SEEDS AND SHOOTS



Some of the fun of gardening is watching and waiting for a tiny seed to grow into a giant; but it's also great fun to sow some seeds that you will be able to harvest in just a few days or weeks.

You will need:

- **Seeds**
- **A wide-mouthed jar**
- **An elastic band**
- **A square of light fabric to fit over the top of the jar**



For a super speedy crop you can grow seed sprouts and shoots. Some are grown in jars and others in a pot, but either way you can be eating your first veggies in less than a week. Cress is one that we all know, but radishes, broccoli, beans and even sunflowers can be eaten when they are just mini-plants.

SHOOTS

Some seeds are so eager to germinate that they don't even need to be planted in order to grow… all they need is light, warmth, and water. We grow seed shoots so that we can enjoy the seeds and tiny new stems and we eat them before they've even had time to send out roots.

Sow your seeds in a damp, dark place and you will get long and leggy seedlings, delicious in stir-fries, sandwiches and salads. It's easy!

1 In a wide-mouthed jar sprinkle in a single layer of seeds and cover them with water. Cover the top of the jar with the fabric, held in place with an elastic band. Leave the seeds to soak in the water overnight.

2 In the morning, pour the water away and rinse the seeds several times with clean water. Drain again and leave your seeds in a spot away from direct light. In the evening rinse and drain your seeds again.

3 Continue to do this, morning and evening, until the seeds have germinated and long pale shoots have grown. Your shoots will be ready to eat when they are about 2" (5 cm) long.

4 You can keep your shoots fresh by storing them in a sealed container in the fridge for three or four days.

Remember to rinse your seed shoots every morning and evening to keep them fresh and tasty! Only ever use seeds that are recommended for growing as shoots or sprouts… not all seeds can be grown in this way!



You will need:

- **Seeds**
- **A container (an egg shell, tea cup, recycled fruit punnet—what can you think of?)**
- **A very small amount of soil or you can use cotton wool, or paper towels instead.**

SPROUTS

Seed sprouts are different from shoots because they are grown in the light, and they are encouraged to grow roots.

1 Dampen the soil so it is moist but not too wet.

2 Sprinkle a thin layer of seeds onto the surface and press them down gently so that they are snuggled onto the surface.

3 Leave your seeds in a bright spot that doesn't get too hot. Water them when the soil dries out… this may be two or three times a day if it is very warm!

4 After only a few days your seeds will germinate and send up fresh green sprouts. Cut these when they are 2" (5 cm) tall and use them to perk up sandwiches and salads.



