How to Grow Carrots and Beets From Seed

Growing root crops can be a delightful experience because the results are always unexpected and reveal themselves only at harvest time. In this guide, we'll explore how to cultivate carrots and beets from seeds, each with its unique requirements.

Carrots

Growing carrots is both exciting and challenging due to their sensitivity to soil conditions. Unless you have well-draining, sandy soil, consider using a raised bed or a container filled with a light potting mix.

- Carrot seeds are tiny, making the broadcasting method preferable. Scatter the seeds evenly; there's no need to cover them. Ensure they remain consistently moist during the next 2-3 weeks by regularly spraying them with a spray bottle.
- Alternatively, you can pre-sprout your carrots. Begin by placing carrot seeds on a pre-moistened potting mix on a paper plate. After generously spreading the seeds, seal the plate in a Ziploc bag and refrigerate it for 24 hours.
- Following this, provide bottom heat to the plate. A seedling heat mat set at 75°F is ideal. Avoid direct sunlight, as this can overheat the seeds.
- After sprouting, prepare your garden space. Check for tiny white sprouts twice a day. Green sprouts may still work but act quickly. Transplant them into your garden by lightly covering them with potting mix and watering gently.
- As the seedlings grow, use scissors to thin them out, ensuring adequate spacing for proper root development.

Beets

Beets are more forgiving when it comes to soil types, growing reasonably well in various conditions, even helping break up clay soil as they expand.

- Beets have larger seeds, making planting straightforward. Like with carrots, thinning will be necessary as they grow. Use scissors for this task.

Fertilization and Watering

Fertilization needs vary between carrots and beets:

- For carrots, avoid excessive nitrogen, as it can lead to excessive top growth. Opt for an organic fertilizer with a higher middle number, such as Neptune’s Harvest Rose or bone meal.
- Beets, on the other hand, benefit from nitrogen and phosphorus. Neptune’s Harvest Rose and flowering formula or blood meal can be suitable choices.
- Consistent watering is crucial for both crops. If the soil dries out too much, beets may develop a woody exterior, and carrots may crack and split.
- Interestingly, beets were initially grown for their leaves rather than their roots. You can harvest the leaves while waiting for the roots to mature.