**carrots** *Daucus carota*

**In history:** Cultivated white during classical times and yellow in medieval times, carrots did not get their trademark orange color until they were bred by farmers in the 17th century to honor the royal Dutch House of Orange.

**Health:** Known for being packed with beta-carotene, carrots supply over 300% of the Daily Value (as Vitamin A) per ½ cup when steamed. Studies show diets rich in beta-carotene from vegetables like carrots lower the risk for breast, prostate and other cancers.

**In the garden:** Most varieties of carrots should be harvested when they are no more than 1½ inches in diameter. This prevents them from developing an unpleasant woody flavor.

**Companion planting:** Plant carrots near lettuce; lettuce leaves will keep the sensitive carrot seedlings safe by providing moisture and shade. Their different growth cycles allow the harvesting of the lettuce just as the carrots need more space to grow.

**Did you know?** Pigments called carotenoids are responsible for the majority of the yellow and orange colors in fruits and vegetables as well as the red of tomatoes, watermelon and chillis. These pigments are so named because the first member of this family of pigments to be chemically isolated came from carrots.

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**lettuce** *Lactuca sativa*

**Health:** Deep green lettuce leaves provide a wealth of nutrients, including Vitamins C and K, and folate, along with the minerals potassium and magnesium. Supplying only 25 calories per cup, lettuce is a nutritional bargain and excellent for heart health.

**In history:** Garden lettuce is thought to be a selected variety of *Lactuca serriola*, a wild lettuce found throughout Europe, Asia, and North Africa. It is believed to have been first cultivated in Egypt but was also a favorite amongst the ancient Greeks.

**Harvest tip:** To achieve an extra nutritional boost, harvest lettuce in the early morning for maximum carotene content and flavor.

**In the garden:** Lettuce prefers cooler conditions so plant in early spring or late summer.

**Did you know?** Medieval paintings often depict the lady of the house harvesting frilly lettuces. These delicate vegetables were considered dainty enough to be touched by refined hands.

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