

HISTORY OF CULTIVATED VEGETABLES

VOL. I.

COMPRISING THEIR BOTANICAL, MEDICINAL, EDIBLE,
AND CHEMICAL QUALITIES; NATURAL HISTORY;

AND RELATION TO ART, SCIENCE, AND COMMERCE.

BY HENRY PHILLIPS,
AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF FRUITS KNOWN IN GREAT BRITAIN.

MDCCCXXII. 1822

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CARROT - DAUCUS.

A genus of the Tentandria Digynia class.
It is a biennial plant, belonging to the numerous Umbellated family .

Daucus (Pliny)as some think, on account of its hot taste.

The wild carrot, *Daucus Carota*, is indigenous to our soil, the seed of which, it is said, when sown in manured ground, will produce good roots the second or third year; but Miller tells us that he could not succeed in obtaining good carrots from the seed of the *Daucus Carota*.

The best kind of carrots appear to have been natives of Candia, where, according to Pliny, the finest and most esteemed carrots were to be found; and the next to them in Achaia.* This author observes, that in whatever country they grow, the best are produced in sound dry ground; that wild carrots are to be found in most countries, but never in a poor hungry soil.

Book xxv. c. 9.
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Theophrastus states, in the ninth book of his History of Plants, that carrots grow in Arcadia, but that the best are found in Sparta.

Petronius Diodotus reckoned four kinds of this root, but there is reason to think he included the parsnip with them.

The ancients used the seed both of the wild and the cultivated carrot, as an internal medicine against the bite of serpents ; they also gave it to animals that had been stung by them ; a dram weight in wine was thought a sufficient dose.

Gerard calls these plants *Daucus Cretensis verus*, or Candie carrots, and says,

"that the true *Daucus* of Dioscorides does not grow in Candia only, but is found upon the mountains of Germanie, and upon the hills and rocks of Iura, about Geneva, from whence it hath been sent and continued by one friendly herbarist unto another, into sundrie regions." This author describes the *Pastinaca sativa tenuifolia*, yellow or garden carrot, which, he says, "are sown in the field and in gardens, where other pot-herbs are: they require a loose and well manured soil." He adds, "that in his time, the yellow carrot was most commonly boiled to be eaten with fat meat, but that he did not esteem it to be a very nourishing food."

By later authors, carrots are said to have been introduced into this country by the Flemings, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and that they were first sown about Sandwich in Kent.

We now cultivate many varieties, so as to suit various soils, and to supply the kitchen regularly at all seasons of the year.

The early red horn carrot is the forwardest sort in ripening, and best adapted for forcing. The white carrot, or *carotte blanche*, of the French, is but little known in our markets, and seldom grown, excepting by those families who are fond of French dishes, as it is much used in their pottage, and is certainly a very delicate root, but is best adapted for summer and autumnal use, as it does not keep so well through the winter as the common carrot.

The French consider the *carotte violette*, purple carrot, to be the sweetest of all the kinds; but it is generally found to run to seed the year it is sown.

The garden carrot delights in a warm sandy or light soil, which should be dug deep, that the roots may better run down; for if they meet with any obstruction, they grow forked. Carrots should not be sown on land that has been much dunged the same year, as it causes them to be worm-eaten, but when they are sown on fresh ground well prepared, a heavy crop may be expected.

The seeds should be sown on a calm day, as, from their light and feathery nature, it is impossible to sow them regularly when the air is agitated: it is also a good practice to mix the seeds with sand, in order that they may not adhere together in sowing.

Mr. Billing, an ingenious farmer in Norfolk, obtained from twenty acres and a half, 510 loads of carrots, which he found equal in use and effect to a thousand load of turnips, or 300 loads of hay. Some of them measured two feet in length and from twelve to fourteen inches round. Cows, sheep, hogs, and horses, become fond of this food; and as they are greatly nourished by them, its culture may be worthy the attention of those farmers whose lands are suitable to its growth.

Four pounds of carrot-seed is considered enough to sow an acre of land.

Martyn says, "It is greatly to be wished that the culture of this root was extended to every part of England, where the soil is proper for the purpose; for there is scarce any root yet known which more deserves it, being a very hearty good food for most sorts of animals. One acre of carrots, if well planted, will fatten a greater number of sheep or bullocks, than three acres of turnips, and the flesh of these animals will be firmer and better tasted. I have known these roots cultivated for feeding deer in parks, which has proved of excellent use in hard winters, when there has been a scarcity of other food; at which times great numbers of deer have perished for want, and those which have escaped, have been so much reduced, as not to recover their flesh the following summer; whereas, those fed with

carrots have been kept in good condition all the winter, and, upon the growth of the grass in the spring, have been fat early in the season, which is an advantage, where the grass is generally backward in its growth.

"There is also an advantage in the cultivation of this root over that of the turnip, because the crop is not so liable to fail; for as the carrots are sown in the spring, the plants generally come up well: whereas turnips are frequently destroyed by the flies at their first coming up, and in dry autumns they are attacked by caterpillars, which in a short time devour whole fields."

Carrots are generally served to table with boiled meats : they make an excellent soup, and form an agreeable pudding. In some parts of the country they are sent to table with fish of every description.

Dr. James says, carrots are one of the most considerable culinary roots; that they strengthen and fatten the body, and are a very proper food for consumptive persons. They are somewhat flatulent, but are thought to render the body soluble, and to contribute to the cure of a cough.

In the *Historia Plantarum*, ascribed to Boerhaave, we read that this root is much celebrated for its virtues against the stone, and nephritic disorders.

The seeds of wild carrots are esteemed one of the most powerful diuretics we are acquainted with, of our own growth. They are given in disorders of the breast and lungs, in pleurisies, in stranguries, and in the stone and gravel. Helmont informs us, that he knew a gentleman who was seized with a fit of the stone every fifteen days, freed from the attacks of his disorder for several years, by means of an infusion of carrot-seed in clear malt liquor. An infusion of them in white wine is excellent in hysterical complaints.

The roots of the garden carrots are now much used as a poultice for running cancers, &c.

Sugar is found in this root, but in less quantities than in the parsnip, or the beet. A very good spirit may be distilled from carrots. An acre of these roots, allowing the produce to be twenty tons, will produce 240 gallons of spirits, which is considerably more than can be obtained from five quarters of barley.*

Parkinson tells us that the gentlewomen of former days, decorated their hats or heads with the leaves of the wild carrot, which in autumn are exceedingly beautiful. This would rather shew the simplicity of our ancestors than their want of taste; as we have seen ladies' dresses trimmed with the curled leaves of the garden parsley, and which were not more admired for their novelty than for the elegance they displayed.

Flowers may be cut out of large carrots that closely resemble ranunculuses, without the least aid of colouring.

* Hornby in Young's Annals.

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