

Hey, Zone 6 veggie gardeners

If you are having winter cabin fever there are a few veggies which you can plant right now and which you will be harvesting far earlier than you might otherwise expect.

No, not outside in the garden where it is in the low twenties and burdened by a foot of very icy snow, but indoors to be taken outside as temperatures permit.

Carrots are a likely candidate, and you can start them right now and could have even started them a few weeks ago. Carrots have long roots obviously and so these roots need room to develop; a five-gallon pail is ideal.

You won't be doing any digging in your garden or compost pile of course, but thinking ahead, it is always good to fill the containers with a mix of soil and compost in autumn to be ready next spring. The containers can overwinter in garage, cellar, porch, or shed.

If you have such pre-filled containers ready or can somehow get suitable soil all you need to do is top the soil filled containers (pre-drilled with drain holes at the bottom) with two inches of potting soil and you are ready.

The potting soil is not required, but using it allows the carrots to germinate before the weed and other seeds which may be in the garden soil can force their way up through it. You can simply pluck them out as they emerge among the already flourishing carrots.

Let them grow in sunny windows until it is safe to take them outside, leave them in their containers, no need to transplant. Just put the containers in full sunlight, well out of reach of Mrs. Deer and Mr. Bunny.

Water as needed.

To harvest, simply dump out the carrots, soil and all into a raised bed or the compost pile, retrieve the carrots and after separating the greens wash the soil off of them.

You have just harvested carrots many weeks earlier than you ever could have from a direct garden seeding!

This procedure can be used with turnips, radishes, kohlrabi, beets and probably many other veggies as well, but the containers may be much shallower than a five-gallon pail.