

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

465 Ferry Road Christchurch
Tel : 03 389 4352 Fax : 03 389 8615
gardening@portstone.co.nz www.portstone.co.nz

February

GROWING CARROTS

Carrots make an ideal crop to follow the summer harvest of warm-weather lovers such as beans, squashes, tomatoes, sweet corn and zucchini.

Carrots are always best grown from seed sown direct into the garden bed. Why? Because carrots hate being transplanted. After transplanting they often produce multiple below-ground shoots (called "forking") instead of the one desirable sturdy root. Fresh fertilizer or manure can also cause forking, so any added fertilizer should be dug in about 3 or 4 weeks before sowing.

Before sowing prepare the soil by digging to about a spade's depth. This is important as the carrots won't like meeting any lumps or bumps as they travel down the soil. Next create a shallow furrow about half a centimeter deep and sprinkle the seeds along the base. Carrot seeds are relatively fine, so it's often suggested that mixing the seeds with some sand will make it easier to achieve even distribution, and reduce the job of thinning crowded seedlings.

Cover the seeds with a thin layer of soil and water well. Carrot seeds need good contact between the seeds and the moisture-bearing soil, so make sure soil is pressed back well after sowing. A helpful tip, especially during hot weather, is to lay a plank of wood along the row. This keeps the seed in firm contact with the soil, holds moisture and keeps the seed cool. Check regularly and remove the plank as soon as there are any signs of germination. Thin crowded seedlings when they are big enough to pull. A second thinning can be carried out as the carrots develop.

LAWNS

Autumn is a good time to sow lawn seed. If you are planning this now is a good time to spray out weeds and existing poor lawn then leave for two weeks.

Best time to water lawns is early morning or late evening – less water loss.

IDEAS FOR THE SMALL GARDEN

Vegetables and herbs can be grown even when space is limited. The best vegetable choices for pots are baby carrots, silverbeet, non-hearting lettuces, spring onions, radishes, Chinese cabbages, dwarf beans, dwarf peas and snow peas.

Herbs for pots include basil (during warmer months), mint, thyme, oregano, parsley and chives.

The larger the pot, the less likely it is to get hot and dry out, so use the biggest pot you can fit.

Choose a good quality potting mix like **Portstones Container Mix**. This will give the vegetable, herbs or flowering plants the best chance of performing at their peak.

Feed container plants with convenient plant foods with slow release qualities (eg Acticote, Thrive Shake 'n' Feed).

FEBRUARY PEST WATCH

Watch out for porina caterpillars eating grass leaves. These grubs hide in burrows in the soil and emerge at night to munch on the lawn. Grass grubs, too, which are the larvae of beetles, can damage the lawn at this time of year. Both pests can be controlled with Yates Soil Insect Killer granules that come in an easy-to-apply sprinkle pack.

WATCH OUT FOR FUNGAL DISEASES

Black Spot is best known as the number one spoiler of rose leaves, but various versions of black spot attack other plants. A severe case of rose black spot will cause leaf drop and subsequent weakening of the plant. Use Super Shield.

PREFERENCE CARD

Have you got one?

By using our preference card you get rewarded for shopping with Portstone.

Keep a look out soon for
**Portstones Fruit Tree List
And Rose Catalogue**

SPRING BULBS

Some varieties in store now
with more arriving daily