

Winter Carrots

By: Elizabeth Atherton-Reid

Photos by: Claudia Bolli



Carrots under their duvet

Denise and Fred Radford's Belgravia garden was included in an Edible Garden Tour organized by Claudia Bolli in August 2012. Their front and back yards were alive with flowers and vegetables, and many of their vegetables, including carrots, were growing in raised beds.

I was on that tour and can still remember my amazement when Denise showed us how she preserves carrots in the ground until November or later. Basically she uses the same technique I use to stay warm in winter. She tucks her carrots in under a duvet. Denise's duvet is made from garbage bags filled with dry leaves which she piles on top of the beds of carrots. Then the bags are covered with snow.

When Denise needs some carrots, she pulls off the garbage bags, digs a row of carrots and then replaces their special duvet. Denise says parsnips are even hardier than carrots and they can last until after Christmas.

In the years since this tour, Claudia Bolli (www.wildgreen.ca) has used this idea for four out of five years and has been successful for three of those four years.

The first year, 2012, Claudia covered three short rows of Nantes and Chantenay carrots in mid-October, using overlapping garbage bag duvets. Luckily, close to a foot of snow fell within two weeks.

Results

At the end of November, when the temperature was -4°C, Claudia dug her carrots. The edges of the rows were frozen and hard to dig, but further in, the soil was quite soft and

moist. The carrots came out in clumps and seemed frozen, but once Claudia brought them into the house, they turned out to be fresh and crunchy.

Claudia was also successful with this method in 2013 and 2014. The crop in late December 2013 was a lovely mix of orange, purple and yellow carrots.

In late fall 2015, Claudia dug her carrots but left some golden beets and parsnips in a raised bed. She covered them in mid-November, and was happy when it snowed soon after.

In January 2016, during a warm spell, she uncovered the parsnips and beets and they appeared so frozen, she thought they would be mushy when the ground was soft enough to dig them. When she dug them at the end of March, both parsnips and beets were perfectly edible. Claudia uses crop rotation, so last summer (2016), she grew her carrots in a deeper part of a raised bed. The carrots she harvested in the fall were big and came out

dirty and then rotted faster. The fall conditions were mixtures of rain, snow and warmth and cold. When I talked to her on January 13th, 2017, the ground was frozen solid under the snow and duvet and she couldn't dig any out. She decided she had to wait for warmer temperatures and was expecting the carrots to be mushy but thought the parsnips would be okay.

In early April, the ground had thawed enough to do some digging. As expected, the carrots were mushy but the parsnips were good.

Claudia thinks this technique works better if the soil is on the dry side when the carrots, beets or parsnips are tucked under their duvet in the fall. Claudia also said because of the wet conditions,



Digging carrots in the winter



Carrots dug November 21, 2014

the leaves she filled the garbage bags with were probably damp and therefore provided less insulating value. As with any kind of farming, weather is an important factor.

What Kind to Grow

Claudia grows Nantes, Chantenay and Danvers carrots because she thinks diversity is a good idea. She says the Nantes do well in loose, deep soil where they can grow long and slender. They can be left in the

For a safe bet, grow parsnips because they can easily be left in the ground until spring. Claudia says they like very deep soil and it's best to purchase new seed each year because the seeds don't keep.

Throwing a duvet over your carrots in the fall is not a sure thing but three out of four years is a pretty good result. That's three out of four years of bragging rights if there is a gardener you are particularly trying to impress.

Tell me. I'll be impressed.



Winter parsnips and beets

ground for some time after the first frost and then stored in the fridge for a couple of months.

Chantenay are stockier so they grow quite well in heavier soil. Danvers are similar to Chantenay but more yellowish and are good for juice.

Claudia suggests this website for good information about different types of carrots:

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/different-types-of-carrots>

Garden Day at the Muttart

By: Britta Johnson, EHS Program Co-Lead, City Gardeners-Muttart

Photos by: Britta Johnson

The Canadian Garden Council has declared June 9-18 as Garden Days across Canada. The aim is to promote garden activities for the public and elevate the profile of public garden spaces. This year the EHS will be participating for the first time and we have chosen to showcase the new flowerbeds at the Muttart on June 17. The mayor will be proclaiming June 17 as Garden Day in Edmonton and Ben Henderson will be in attendance.



There will be a children's table where the youngsters can plant their own flower or vegetable, the EHS City Gardeners will be there to answer questions on the whole project and the plants

used and there will be information tables for Front Yards in Bloom and Partners in Park. The City Gardeners have put several years of time and effort into planning and creating these new beds which have replaced the Henrietta Muir Park beds and they will give the EHS a high profile in the area.

We encourage everyone to stop by, take a picture and say hello. Parking is limited around the Muttart because of construction so we encourage you to walk, bike or carpool. We hope to have the use of the Edmonton Ski Club's parking lot.

Join us on June 17 from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm at the Muttart.

