HEALTH BENEFITS

- One medium carrot contains about two times the amount of recommended Vitamin A your body needs.

- Carrots are also a good source of fiber, vitamin C and potassium, as well as vitamin B6, folate, and several minerals including calcium and magnesium.

- Red and purple carrots contain antioxidant-rich lycopene, the same phytochemical that gives tomatoes their characteristic red color. Lycopene helps protect against some types of cancer.

- Carrots have a high natural sugar content but, due to their high level of other nutrients and fiber, are a healthy source of sugars.

SNACKING + COOKING TIPS

- Add shredded carrots to salads and soups for a crunchy, sweet flavor. You can also add carrot tops to soups for creating a broth!

- Bake carrots with a little oil and seasonings to make carrot “fries.” Try serving with hummus.

- Mix shredded carrots into breads or muffins when baking.

- Boil and mash carrots with potatoes for a sweet twist on traditional mashed potatoes.

BIOLOGY + ECOLOGY

- The carrot is a root vegetable of the Apiaceae family. The edible part of the carrot is known as a “taproot.” This plant is cultivated for its enlarged edible root and its foliage is fine and lacy. In fact, the wild carrot is actually a familiar wildflower known as “Queen Anne’s lace.”

- Carrots are biennial, meaning they have a two-year life cycle. In the first year, the edible root is formed, followed by production of the flower and seeds in the second year. Carrots require a growing season of 110 to 160 days and need deep, loose, well-drained soils.

- Baby-cut carrots are made from full-grown, small diameter carrots by peeling and cutting them to the desired length. They are planted closer together so the roots stay slim and there is less waste when the carrots are cut to their small size. True baby carrots are removed from the ground early and actually look like miniature carrots.

HISTORY + CULTURE

- Carrots originated in Central Asia, near Afghanistan, several thousand years ago.

- Ancestors of the modern carrot were not yellow-orange but of purplish colors ranging from lavender to almost black. The yellow-orange root came from a mutant variety that lacked the purple pigment.
Ancient Greeks and Romans used carrots for medicinal purposes.

In the 14th century, carrots arrived in China which is now the world’s leading carrot producer.

**BUSINESS + ECONOMICS**

- Americans eat on average, 10.6 lbs. of fresh carrots per person per year.
- The top carrot producing states are California, Washington and right here in Wisconsin.
- Approximately 6.3 percent of the fresh carrots supply in 2015 was exported. Imports totaled 427 million pounds.

**CLASSROOM CONNECTION**

**HANDS-ON ACTIVITY**

- Bring in fresh whole carrots to share with students as a snack sample. Cut the carrot tops off to use as a demo. Place a few toothpicks in the carrot top so that it can support itself on the rim of a cup. Fill the cup so that a third of the carrot is submerged. Observe what happens over time. Note: a new taproot will not form. However the plant will produce greens and flowers that will give rise to seeds.

**BOOKSHELF**

- *The Life Cycle of a Carrot* by Linda Tagliaferro
- *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Kraus
- *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens

**SOURCES:**

https://www.agmrc.org/commodities-products/vegetables/carrots/