Press release: for immediate use

Date: 20/08/2025

**Rooting for farming’s future**

**Passing the baton: Brilliant bunch of farmers join forces to launch British Carrot Day 2025**

***We meet the fourth generation of a carrot growing family as preparations get underway for a national day to celebrate this often-overlooked hero of the veg rack …***

WHILE his classmates were heading off on holiday after sitting their GCSE exams, a 16-year-old Will Hunter was climbing behind the wheel of a tractor and carting carrots from the field.

“I started full-time work on the farm the day I left school,” recalls Will. “My dad was keen for me to get experience of every single job. It was really important to him that I would never ask anybody to do a job that I couldn’t do myself.”

Will, now 31, is one of a small group of six farm businesses, all members of the British Carrot Growers Association, who have dug into their own pockets to fund a national celebration of - to give them their Sunday name - *Carota sativa.*

British Carrot Day 2025 will take place on Friday, October 3rd and plans are coming together for this national celebration of all-things carrot.

The farmers dipped their toe into organising a day dedicated to carrots last year and are determined this autumn’s efforts will become an annual event to encourage people to buy, get creative, eat, and cook with carrots.

“It’s not just recipes and nutritional information - carrots are especially high in Vitamin A, Vitamin K, and fibre - we want to share their field to fork journey; the story of the farmers who grow them,” explains Will.

But why? Surely we all buy and eat carrots anyway …

“Like a lot of good things carrots are often taken for granted,” explains Will, who - as many an allotment holder can testify - reveals they are actually one of the most difficult vegetables to grow. Too hot (so this year’s heatwaves have caused carnage) and they wilt, while at the other end of the meteorological spectrum sitting in waterlogged soil runs risks of them turning to mush and mould. As if this wasn’t enough, they don’t like frost - requiring swaddling in a straw blanket during the winter - while an infestation of carrot fly can wipe out a whole crop. Yes, for something so taken for granted - the quick snack for children and the easy splash of colour on the plate - the trials, tribulations and downright tear-jerking torment that goes into growing the humble carrot is almost Shakespearean in its pathos.

“As a grower there are so many things that can go wrong,” says Will. “This is mostly because - unlike potatoes - they are stored in the ground rather than sitting around at a controlled climate in a shed for months on end. They are harvested fresh from the soil, washed and packed and on the supermarket shelves within two or three days maximum.”

Other challenges include the fact carrots are fussy and will not grow in land that has been used for growing them over the previous seven years. Some farmers don’t even attempt another crop for a whole decade.

“Every year it’s a real challenge to find good, fertile soil that hasn’t been used for growing carrots for at least seven years,” says Will. “That’s why my family grow carrots in land from Suffolk to Scotland. Apart from the fresh soil, having such a geographical mix gives us different climates for staggering when the crop is ready to harvest. Because of all the planning that goes into these crop rotations we manage to harvest pretty much all year round.”

Perhaps unusually for farmers competing for business, members of the British Carrot Growers are - forgive the pun - a tight bunch.

“It’s such a specialised sector there aren’t many of us,” says Will. “So we try to meet up a few times a year and talk about everything and anything to do with carrots, such as new machinery, varieties and subjects such as disease resistance. To say we are passionate about carrots is an understatement. We have all realised that it’s important for the future of the carrot for us to try to educate the public into not taking it for granted. If everybody just ate a few more - maybe by looking at some of our recipe suggestions - it could make a big difference and keep British-grown carrots on our shelves.”

Will has recently taken over the reins from his father Warren as managing director of the family’s Huntapac growing, packing and supplying business.

It was his great grandfather, also William, who moved from transporting straw for farms to growing when he bought a smallholding in Tarleton in Lancashire.

“It was during World War II and he soon started supplying local fruit and veg markets,” explains Will, who is married to Charlotte and has two young children.

The rapid success of the business may well have been inadvertently boosted by the Air Ministry - in a bid to prevent the Germans finding out about Britain using radar to intercept bombers on night raids – issuing statements saying our country’s wartime pilots were getting their excellent night vision from eating lots of carrots.

As an aside, there is more than a grain of truth in this old adage that carrots help us see better. They are rich in [beta-carotene](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zpt33k7/revision/1), which when eaten our bodies turn into retinol, which is well-recognised for keeping our eyes healthy.

Of all the challenges currently facing farmers Will, whose team grow 2,800 acres of traditional carrots and a further 200 acres of the smaller French variety Chantenay, ranks climate change as among the most serious.

“Right from being a young boy I can remember farmers complaining about the weather,” says Will. “But the severity of the weather extremes over the last 15 or 20 years is something we can’t afford, as food producers, to turn a blind eye to.

“I also worry that current farming policy is taking a lot of land out of production and old-fashioned practices like dredging ditches, to mitigate against flood risks, are getting forgotten.

“Because of the long rotation needed between growing carrot crops we rent, rather than own, land. Time and again we’re finding farms that can get more money from farming payments to switch their land over to grass or woodland than they would be paid in rent from food producers like us.

“This needs looking at if this country is serious about a sustainable supply of British-grown food and reducing imports and the environmental damage they do.”

**How does Will eat his carrots?**

“I love them honey roasted as a side vegetable,” says farmer Will Hunter. “My other favourite way to eat carrots is in a beef stew, something rich like a bourguignon with the carrots being a lovely contrasting change in texture and flavour to the meat.”

**Slices of the action**

* While kitchen gardeners grow carrots on a three-year rotation, to avoid build-up of pests and diseases in the soil, farmers leave as long as ten years between carrot crops.
* Carrots only like sandy soils, growing wonky if the land is stony.
* Britain produces over 700,000 tonnes of carrots each year, around 100 each for every member of the population.
* Carrots are harvested 11 months of the year, with southern regions starting earlier and moving up the country to Scotland.
* Early carrots were purple or yellow, with orange developed in 16th century Holland.
* Muddy carrots stay fresh longer and can be kept in a kitchen cupboard or pantry. Ready-washed should be stored in the fridge. Peeling is down to personal preference.
* Farmers’ markets offer a good hunting ground for carrot varieties. Suggestions include:

**Rainbow** offers a colourful mix of orange, yellow, white, pink, and purple carrots; perfect for adding visual zing to salads.

**Chioggia**, an Italian heirloom variety, is strikingly red-and-white striped.

**Nantes** is an orange old French variety that combines crunchiness with a mild, sweet taste.

British Carrot Day aims to push people out of their carrot culinary comfort zones; to look at them as a more versatile vegetable than simply slicing up to placate hungry toddlers or boiling up and buttering. For more information, including recipe ideas, visit [www.britishcarrots.co.uk](http://www.britishcarrots.co.uk)