THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORIGINAL EUROPEAN CARROT MATERIAL

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CONTENTS

Introduction .................................. 64
History of the purple carrot in Europe .......... 64
Development of the yellow carrot ............... 69
Have the white cultivated carrots been derived from the yellow? .... 70
The first appearance of the red orange carrots .... 71
Summary .................................... 75
Samenvatting ................................ 75
References ................................... 76

INTRODUCTION

In a former article (5) it was shown that it is highly probable that the original European carrot material was imported from the Arab countries about the 13th or 14th century. This original material consisted of two types, one purple, the other yellow.

The purple type used to be called “red” like red cabbage and red beet, until about 1700. Later, when the purple carrot was more or less forgotten, the word “red” was used for the orange carrot, which came into existence later.

In the following article the development from the original material to the first orange red carrots is traced.

HISTORY OF THE PURPLE CARROT IN EUROPE

We have seen that the “red” carrot was mentioned in Italy at about the end of the 13th or the beginning of the 14th century. Venice had an important trade with the Arab countries at that time. Therefore it is quite possible that the purple carrot entered Italy through this channel, and found its way from here into France, where it was mentioned in the 14th century. Later, in 1744, ZWINGER (33) writes that the “red” carrot was first an Italian garden crop, and later also grown in Switzerland.

According to AL-AWAM (10) carrots were grown near Sevilla in Spain in the 12th century, but he does not specify the varieties. As the purple variety was the best of the two at that time, why should not they have grown the purple one? Therefore the purple carrot may have had a second introduction into France from Spain.

In the Netherlands the “red” carrot was mentioned in the 15th century. It is very probable that it had come from France, for its specific Dutch name until some time in the 16th century was the French word carote.

64
In Germany the purple carrot probably spread at the end of the 17th or in the first part of the 18th century. For in 1684 ELSSHOLTZ (15) said that the “red” carrot was well known by the Walloons, the French, the Brabanders and the Hollanders, but the Germans were not very well acquainted with it, whereas HESSEN (19) in 1740 wrote a whole paragraph on its use in Germany. The purple carrot was then called in Germany *Holländische carotte*. This suggests that the purple carrot had been introduced into Germany from Holland. HESSEN’s remark that the best seed came from Holland, suggests that the purple carrot was sufficiently important in the Netherlands at that time to give its production and selection due care.

I did not find any indication that the purple carrot was grown in England as a real garden crop. It is mentioned, of course, in the herbals of GERARDE (17) and PARKINSON (28) but not by a horticulturist like GARDINER (18) writing in 1603. PHILIP MILLER (25), in 1768, discusses it as a curiosity only, which he grew from seeds he had received from Aleppo in Syria.

The seed firm of SUTTON & SON at Reading (Eng.) had the *Long Purple* in their cata-