

Beets *Beta vulgaris*

Beets are generally considered a root vegetable, but the leaves are actually the most nutritional part of the plant. Soil quality is important; a garden bed of loose loam enables the taproot to mine nutrients from deep in the soil. Though plants are fairly heat tolerant, flavor is best when a beet matures in cool weather.

Location and soil Beets are easy to grow in the right conditions: a sunny space with well drained soil with a pH between 6 and 7.5. Be sure to amend heavy soil with compost to prevent misshapen roots. If you are growing beets for the greens, a part-shade location will yield good results too.

Garden throughout the cooler months, beginning about a month before the last expected spring frost. For a prolonged yield, stagger spring plantings every 2 to 3 weeks, and plant again in late summer for a fall harvest. Daytime temperatures of 60° to 65°F are ideal for beet development.

Germination Seed will sprout in 1 to 3 weeks. Though seeds germinate in soils as cold as 45°F, seedlings appear most quickly when soil temperature is between 60° and 80°F.

Thinning Thin seedlings after the first true leaves open so plants are spaced about 2 inches apart. Use scissors to avoid disturbing the tender roots of the remaining plants, and use the thinnings in salads. Or, you can delay thinning until plants are 6 to 8 inches tall, and enjoy the beet tops as sautéed greens.

Care Water regularly and do not crowd plants. After thinning, mulch around the plants to help keep soil evenly moist and suppress weeds.

Fertilize Beets are heavy feeders. After the first true leaves fully develop, fertilize with an all-purpose vegetable food, or an organic kelp or slow-release fertilizer. If using kelp, apply weekly until plants are 3-inches tall.

Harvest Cut greens when they are 4 to 6 inches high. Roots are most tender when harvested at 2 inches or smaller.

Nutrition Beet roots are a source of Vitamin C, Folate, and essential minerals, including Potassium and Manganese. The tops supply the same benefits, plus large amounts of Vitamins A and K as well as Iron, Calcium, and Magnesium.

	Ruby Queen	Detroit Dark Red	Early Wonder
TIP – A beet “seed” is actually a dried fruit, which can contain up to four seeds. This is why seedlings are often clumped together ... and why thinning is so important.			
Description	Deep red, tender and sweet. Fine-grained roots maintain color when cooked.	Heirloom variety with dark red, sweet, globe-shaped roots. Fast growing.	Heirloom variety with tasty abundant greens. Dark red roots are delicious too.
Comments	Good performance on poor soils	Introduced in 1892 and still a gardeners' favorite.	Greens grow to a height of 18 inches.
Days to Harvest	55 to 70	52 to 65	52 to 60