

How to Grow Beets

Beets are a cool-weather crop. Sow beets in the garden 2 to 3 weeks before the last average frost date in spring. Continue succession plantings every 3 weeks until temperatures reach 80°F. Beets can again be planted in late summer or early autumn 6 to 8 weeks before the first average frost in autumn. Beets require 45 to 65 days to reach harvest. Grow beets as a winter crop in mild-winter regions.

Description: Beets are biennial plants grown as annuals. They are grown for their swollen, bulb-shaped root and also for their leaves. Beet roots can be red, yellow, or white. A rosette of large leaves sprout from the root.

Site: Grow beets in full sun or partial shade in warm regions. Plant your beets in well-worked, loose soil rich in organic matter. Be sure to remove all stones and clods from planting beds so as not to impede or split growing roots. Add aged compost to growing beds in advance of planting. Beets grow best where the soil pH is 6.0 to 6.8.

Planting time: Sow beets in the garden 2 to 3 weeks before the last average frost date in spring. Continue succession plantings every 3 weeks until temperatures reach 80°F. Beets can again be planted in late summer or early autumn 6 to 8 weeks before the first average frost in autumn. Beets require 45 to 65 days to reach harvest. Beets can tolerate frost but will go to seed if temperatures are too cold. Grow beets as a winter crop in mild-winter regions. In hot weather, beet roots will become woody.

Planting and spacing. Beets are grown from seed clusters about the size of a small pea. Each cluster contains several seeds. Sow seed clusters 1 inch deep and 1 inch apart; thin successful seedlings to 3 inches apart when seedlings are 3 inches tall. Space rows 12 to 18 inches apart. Add thinned seedlings to salads. Beets generally do not transplant well.

Water and feeding: Keep beets evenly watered. Do not let the soil dry out. Lack of water will cause roots to become stunted, stringy, and tough. Add aged compost to planting beds in advance of seeding. You should side dress beets with compost at midseason.

Care: Keep planting beds weed free to avoid competition for water and nutrients. Thin beets as soon as they are about 3 inches tall to avoid crowding which can hinder root growth

Container growing: Beets can be grown in containers. Make sure to thin seedlings to 4 inch centers.

Pests: Beets have no serious pest problems. Check roots for boring insects. Leaf miner can tunnel inside the leaf surface leaving gray streaks.

Diseases: Beets have no serious diseases problems.

Harvest: Beets will reach harvestable size--1 to 3 inches in diameter--40 to 80 days after sowing. Lift beets gently. Twist the leaves off rather than cutting them off to prevent juices from bleeding.

Common name: Beets, beet greens, beetroot

Botanical name: *Beta vulgaris*

Origin: Southern Europe