



Growing Beets

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Beets Like To Be Pampered

Beets grow best in rich, loose, deep, slightly basic soils. They can grow very large under optimum conditions. Although smaller ones are tender, edible soccer ball sized beets are possible. They grow best where there is a continuous supply of moisture and nutrients.

When to Plant

Beets can be planted early in spring when the ground can be worked without compacting. In the case of no-till gardening, they can be planted when there is little danger of an extended cold period. They can withstand some frost, but need a bit of warmth to germinate.

Planting

Beets are one of the few root crops that you can start ahead in a cold frame or greenhouse and transplant into the garden. The seeds come in clusters that cannot be broken apart. You can sow some in March

indoors for planting in the garden in April. Sow more directly into the garden in April then more again every three weeks until early July. You can plant more in August for a fall harvest. By staggering the planting it is possible to have fresh greens and beets for much of the growing season. Soak the seeds for 20 minutes and plant them ½ inch deep and 2 to 4 inches apart. Once they are 2 to 3 inches tall they should be thinned to 4 to 6 inches apart. The plants removed can be transplanted into any missing spaces. You need to keep the soil moist particularly during germination.

Varieties to Plant

Detroit Dark Red is a proven favourite but there are many others including sausage-shaped varieties and orange ones.

Problems you Might Encounter

Black spots inside the roots may be a sign of boron deficiency. Principal insect and disease problems of beets are flea beetles, leaf miners, aphids and *Cercospora* leaf spot.

Storage

You can begin harvesting in the middle of the summer. They can effectively be stored through the winter in a cold cellar in damp sand. As soon as you pull them, remove the tops to prevent wilting. Leave about an inch of the top to prevent bleeding during cooking.

Learn more about growing beets from the Cornell University site www.gardening.cornell.edu >

Learn more about beets on Wikipedia >