

**Latin Name/Genus:** *Beta vulgaris*  
**Family:** *Amaranthaceae*

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Season:** Cool Season Biennial

**Exposure:** Full-sun or partial-shade

**Zone:** Hardy to Zone 5

**Timing:** Direct sow 4 weeks after last frost to mid-summer. Beets will not produce roots if planted when the soil is too cold. Seeds will germinate in 5-12 days, depending on soil temperature. Optimal soil temperature: 10-26°C.



**Starting:** Sow 1cm (½") deep, 5-10cm (2-4") apart in rows 30-45cm (12-18") apart.

**Days to Maturity:** From direct sowing.

**Growing:** Ideal pH: 6.0-6.8. For uniformly sized beets, thin carefully to 7-15cm (3-6") apart when seedlings are 5cm (2") tall. Eat any thinned plants, roots and all. root size is controlled by spacing and variety.

**Nutrient Preferences:** Beets enjoy all macronutrients, especially potassium, and even benefit from micronutrients like boron.

**Harvest:** Harvest at any size, but for the best flavour, pull the beets as soon as they have reached full-size. Eat the greens too. Store in the ground, or in moist peat or sand just above freezing.

**Diseases & Pests:** If beets have black cankers in the roots, soil may need more boron. Dissolve 1 tablespoon of borax to 4L (8½ US pints) of water, and spread evenly over 9m<sup>2</sup> (100 sq ft) of soil - do not overapply at a heavier rate. Circular lesions with a purple halo on the leaf is cercospora leaf spot - prevent by strict crop rotation and sanitation. Leaf miner maggots cause blistered grey tunnels in leaves - just squish them inside the leaf. Floating row cover carefully applied after planting will prevent the leaf miner fly from laying its eggs.

**Companion Planting:** Beets add minerals to the soil, while the greens can be great for your compost. Plant with bush beans, Brassicas, corn, garlic, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce, and mint. Add cut mint leaves as a mulch for beets. Avoid planting beets near pole beans, as the nitrogen fixed by the beans may encourage leafy beet growth and diminished root development.