



HOW TO GROW BEETROOT

Beetroot is a versatile, delicious crop and is very easy to grow, making it an excellent veg for beginner growers and a wonderful addition to any kitchen garden!

When and how to sow your seeds

Early sowings can be made under cover from February in module trays. They can be transplanted into the final position about 4-5 weeks later.

From March, seeds can be direct-sown outside with horticultural fleece for frost protection. Bolt resistant varieties are better at withstanding colder, fluctuating temperatures.

Maincrop beetroot is usually sown outdoors from April.

Try doing multiple sowings from February – July to spread out your harvest. With appropriate varieties for each season, it is possible to have beetroot almost all year around.

Transplanting

For direct sowing, make sure that the growing beds have a reasonably fine tilth, adding a little compost or well-rotted manure into the soil beforehand.

Beetroot seeds are actually little clusters of seeds and will benefit from being thinned to achieve their final spacing of 30x10cm.

Plant care

Keep the bed moist and well weeded, removing rotten leaves from the beetroot to reduce disease and pest predation. Water more regularly in hot weather to prevent the beetroot from trying to go to seed.

Disease and pests

Alternaria leaf spot is a fungal disease that thrives in hot and humid conditions. Thankfully it is largely cosmetic and will only reduce your harvestable leaves.

Slugs and snails may be attracted to young seedlings newly planted outside.

Damping off is a fungal disease that can be triggered by overwatering and causes plants to wilt and die at the base of the main stem.

Rodents can become a problem later in the season, sometimes eating whole beetroots right out of the growing beds. The best remedy for this is to harvest all storage beetroot at once and keep it in sacks in a cool, dry place that is rodent proof.

Harvest

Beetroot can be harvested from early summer and are best harvested once roots are at least golf ball size. Leave the rest to reach maturity and harvest as and when you need them. The plant tops can be twisted off and cooked and eaten like chard.

Seed saving

Beetroot will readily cross with other members of the same species (*Beta vulgaris*) like perpetual spinach and chard. They are biennial and will flower in their second year either by overwintering in their growing position or selecting the best roots to store and replanting them in the spring. A minimum of 10 plants will be needed for a good population.

Allow the plants to flower and go to seed and as the

Our recommended varieties

- Chioggia is an Italian variety with striking white and red concentric rings
- Detroit is a reliable maincrop beetroot producing large globe-shaped red roots
- Cyindra is a distinctive, very attractive variety which forms long, thin cylindrical beets and is a great storage variety

large seed heads mature, harvest them as they begin to dry either by cutting the entire stalk or rubbing the seeds off the heads into a bucket. Make sure that the seeds are thoroughly dry before placing into long term storage.