

Beetroot



Plant group: Roots

Start under cover: March - June

Plant out: May – July

Sow Direct: April - July

Harvest: September - November

Choosing Seed

Use organic seed where possible. Good sources are:

The Reading Food Growing Network (www.readingfoodgrowingnetwork.org.uk) seed swap events,

The Organic Gardening Catalogue (www.organiccatalogue.com)

or the Seed Co-operative (www.seedcooperative.org.uk)

Try these varieties: Boltardy, Cylindra, Golden Detroit, Moneta

Sowing and Planting

Sow under cover in March for early beets, or sow directly into the ground between April and July. Sow every few weeks for a continuous harvest through to Autumn. Sow seeds 2.5cm deep, in rows 20cm to 30 cm apart, spacing seeds a few cms apart for smaller beets, but give them a bit more room if you want larger ones.

Harvesting

The beets will poke their heads above the level of the soil as they grow, so you can judge their size and pick them small if you want baby beets. Beet leaves can be also be harvested for use in the same way as spinach or chard. For larger beets, grow on for 3 months from sowing.

Lift as needed, but beets can be damaged by hard frosts, so if you are leaving them in the ground a little longer, cover the beets with straw or fleece. If the ground is very wet, beets are better lifted and used or stored.

Storing

Lift beets, twist off the leaves leaving a short length of stem, and store in boxes of damp sand or peat substitute in a dark, frost-free place. Beetroot can easily be pickled in vinegar – clean the beets, twist off the leaves leaving a short stem, and boil in their skins to preserve the colour.

Growing in containers

Using a large container, you could have some success growing baby beets, but they will fare better in the ground.