

Beets at Growing Gardens



Family: Amaranthaceae

Genus: Beta

Species seen at Growing Gardens: Beta Vulgaris

1. Red Ace
2. Bull's Blood
3. Chioggia
4. Golden

Growing Tips

- Plant beets early in the spring—they withstand frost pretty well so there is no need to wait until the last frost has passed
- Refer to "Days to Maturity" on seed package to ensure plant has enough time to fully mature
- Prefers loose and well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter
- Make sure plant receives ample sunshine
- Use row covers to protect from insects, disease, and harsh sun during first days or weeks
- When seedlings are about one inch tall, thin to one plant per inch
- As crop continues to grow, thin to three to four inches between plants

Harvesting Tips

- It is generally best to wait until "Days to Maturity" date has been reached
- Greens are best when they are four to six inches tall
- The best size for the actual beet is between one and a half to three inches in diameter—as they grow larger, they tend to become more fibrous
- Gently lift beets out of the soil, using a pitch fork if necessary but taking care not to puncture the harvest
- Use damaged or rotting harvests right away

Cooking Tips

- Eat up! Beets are an excellent source of vitamins A, B, and C, and beet greens have a higher iron content than spinach!
- Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees
- Rinse under water and scrub until all dirt has been removed

- Cover individual beets with tinfoil and place in a baking dish with a small amount of water
- Bake 45-60 minutes checking periodically
- When it is tender enough that fork goes through thickest part, take out of oven
- Find your favorite recipe and get started!
- Cooking side notes:
 - There are a lot of different ways to cook beets, and different people will swear by different methods
 - Beets can be boiled either whole, or cut up, but this removes many of the nutrients. If you choose this method, consider a way in which the beet water can be reused
 - The beet skin can be peeled off prior to, or after cooking-most people will do this because the skin can be a little hairy in parts, but again, this removes nutrients
 - To speed up oven cooking time, cut beets into smaller pieces and roast with olive oil and salt and pepper

Storing Tips

- Beets are suited for long term storing if the temperature is right-humidity will cause the greens to wilt
- Beets will store with the greens intact for one to two weeks in the refrigerator
- To prolong the storage time, twist the leaves off about two inches from the root and use immediately-they will take moisture from the beetroot
- Then store the beet in the refrigerator for up to three weeks
- Always be sure to keep beets and beet greens in a plastic bag in the refrigerator to preserve freshness

Variety	Species	Description
Red Ace 	Beta Vulgaris	Leaves are green with bright red veins, beetroot is dark red and remains sweet and tender even as they grow older and larger
Bull's Blood 	Beta Vulgaris	Heirloom variety, dark red leaves whose color intensifies as plant matures, dark red beetroot with sweet flavor

<p>Chioggia</p> 	<p>Beta Vulgaris</p>	<p>Heirloom variety, leaves are green with dark red stems, beetroot is red and white striped with a mild, sweet flavor</p>
<p>Golden</p> 	<p>Beta Vulgaris</p>	<p>Leaves are light green, beetroot is golden-yellow and very sweet, won't "bleed" like most varieties</p>

References:

Johnny's Selected Seeds

<http://www.johnnyseeds.com/default.aspx>

Harvest to Table

<http://harvesttotable.com/>

Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet, Horticulture and Crop Science

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1604.html>

Some images from Sustainable Seed Colorado

<http://sustainableseedco.com/>