



The most powerful health benefits of beets include its ability to lower blood pressure, help prevent cancer, cleanse the liver, treat anemia, increase stamina, and boost libido. They also prevent macular degeneration, improve blood circulation, aid in skin care, help prevent cataract, build immunity, and treat respiratory problems. These benefits of beetroots can be attributed to their richness in nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. Beets are incredibly healthy eating. Both the roots and the leaves are an excellent source of antioxidants, minerals, and vitamin C. They also contain betaine, a compound that is essential for cardiovascular health. Eat them raw, cooked, pickled. Most important of all, it is very easy to grow beets from seed.

How to Grow Beets

Planting

A soil pH between 6.0 and 7.0 is best, but slightly alkaline soils are tolerated in some areas.

Till in a moderate amount of aged manure before planting. Beets require especially good nutrition and a high phosphorus level to germinate. Go easy on nitrogen however, an excess will cause sprawling greens and tiny bulbs beneath the soil.

Wait until soil reaches 10C (50°F) before planting. Seed as early as possible in spring. Plant seed 1 cm (1/2 in) deep in rows 45 cm (18 in) apart. Once plants are up, thin to 5 to 10 cm (2 to 4 in) apart. Make repeat plantings during summer. Young beets have a better quality. For a good crop of beets for winter storage make sure you do a seeding mid-summer.

To Harvest: When the root tops begin to push up above the ground, carefully remove the soil around one of them to check size. Best size is 5 cm (2 in) diameter. Pull the roots out of the ground, do not dig them up. Leave an inch of stem on root to prevent 'bleeding' when cooking.

Care

Thinning is necessary, as you may get more than one seedling out of each seed. Thin when they reach about 2 inches high by pinching them off. Pulling them out of the ground may disturb the roots of nearby seedlings. Use thinned plants for steamed greens, which are extremely high in vitamins. Established plants should be thinned to 3-4 inches between plants.

Mulch and water well. Beets need to maintain plenty of moisture. Any necessary cultivation should be gentle, beets have shallow roots that are easily disturbed.

Pests/Diseases

Diseases & Pests

If beets have black cankers in the roots, soil may need more boron. Dissolve 1 tablespoon of borax to 4L (8 US pints) of water, and spread evenly over 9 m (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 rotation and sanitation. Leaf miner maggots cause blistered grey tunnels in leaves. Just squish them inside the leaf. Floating row cover carefully applied will prevent the leaf miner fly from laying its eggs.



Companion Planting

Beets add minerals to the soil. The greens are very good for the compost. Plant with bush beans, Brassicas, corn, garlic, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce, and mint. Add cut mint leaves as a mulch for beets.

Avoid planting with pole beans.

Pickled Beets



Bulls Blood, Chioggia & Albino Beets

These beets are sweet and tart with a gentle hint of cinnamon and a kick of ginger root. Made with apple cider vinegar and cane sugar.

You'll need about 6 lbs of beets and this recipe yields 8 pints.

Brine:

4 cups apple cider vinegar

2 cups water

3 cups cane sugar

8 x 1/8" slices of fresh peeled ginger

4 cinnamon sticks or 2 tbsp cinnamon nibs

1 tbsp sea salt

Bring to a gentle boil stirring until the sugar is dissolved.

Prepare beets: Wash and trim the tops of the beets leaving behind about 1" of stock and all of the tail. Boil the beets for about 25 minutes (depending on size, you want a fork to easily pierce the beet but still be ever so slightly firm in the middle. Remove beet from boiling water and soak in cold water, then using your finger and the edge of a spoon remove the skin, root and the base of the stock.

Quarter or eighth your beets into similar sized bites and fill your hot and sterilized jars up to the neck with beet pieces. Add 1-2 slices of fresh ginger root (peeled) into each jar and a small piece of cinnamon stick or some nibs. Top each jar to 1/2" head space with boiling brine. Wipe jar top clean and place hot lid on jar, then screw ring to finger tight and water bath process in rapidly boiling water for 15 minutes (for pint jars). Ensuring the water covers your jar lids by at least 2".

After 12 hours or so, ensure all of the lids are sealed tight, any that are not can be stored in the fridge for a few weeks, or could be re-processed.

Allow the beets to settle into their new flavor bath for a few weeks before enjoying