



Mercy Wellness Seed Program Growing Guides

Beets:

Start: Start your first round of beets in early spring, as soon as the soil is workable. Make successive plantings every 2 to 3 weeks until mid-summer. Successive plantings are possible as long as daytime temperatures don't exceed 75°F. In soil that's at least 50°F (10°C), germination takes place in 5 to 8 days. In soil colder than 50°F, germination may take 2 to 3 weeks. Tip: To speed up germination, or when planting in areas with low moisture and rainfall, soak the seeds in water for 24 hours before planting. Sow seeds ½-inch deep and 1 to 2 inches apart in rows that are about 1 foot apart. After sowing, cover the seeds with a thin layer of soil. Each wrinkled beet "seed" is actually a cluster of 2 to 4 seeds, so you will need to thin the young plants to 3 to 4 inches apart once the greens get to be about 4 inches tall. Tip: When thinning, don't pull up the plants, as you may accidentally disturb the roots of the beets you want to keep. Instead, just snip off the greens (and eat them).

Water: Mulch and then water regularly with about 1 inch per week. Beets need to maintain plenty of moisture. Weed as needed but be gentle; beets have shallow roots that are easily disturbed.

Soil: Soil pH between 6.0 and 7.0 is best and slightly alkaline (7.0+) soils can be tolerated. Beets do not tolerate soil with a low pH (below 6.0). To allow beet roots to develop properly, soil should be free of rocks and other obstacles.

Light: Full sun.

Fertilize: If you fertilize, go easy on nitrogen; excess will cause an abundance of greens but tiny bulbs beneath the soil. Harvest: Days to maturity tend to be between 55 and 70 for most varieties. In other words, plan to harvest beets about 2 months after planting. Harvest roots when golf ball-size or larger; very large roots may be tough and woody. Loosen the soil around the beet and gently pull it from the earth. Harvest the beet greens at almost any time, beginning when thinning seedlings. Take one or two mature leaves per plant, until leaf blades are more than 6 inches tall and become tough. (Roots will not fully form without greens, so leaving some is necessary for proper development.)

Notes: Store harvested beets in a cool, dry place. An unheated closet might do, or put them in a cooler in your basement.

