

Guide to Growing Vegetables from Seed

Beets *Beta vulgaris*

Growing Needs: Biennial, partial-full sun, sandy or loamy soil.

Beets are a perfect 2 in 1 veggie - greens and roots can both be eaten and are delicious and nutritious in their own rights. Greens were first cultivated in the Mediterranean region and were eventually bred to produce enlarged roots as well as edible leaves.

Sowing & Growing:

Beets are a cool weather crop that should be direct seeded. Direct seed 4 weeks before the last frost $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep in rows 12-18" apart. Plant every 2 weeks until the soil temp. reaches 75°F for a consistent harvest through the season. You will need to thin 2 to 4 weeks after seeding to final plant spacing of 2-4". Beets prefer loamy soil, high in phosphorus and lower in nitrogen. High nitrogen will produce great greens but small roots. Beets do much better with a consistent supply of moisture, but don't like sitting in water. Beets will flower and get woody if exposed to long periods of hot weather.

Harvesting:

Beet greens can be conservatively harvested when they are just 2-3" tall. Small greens can be eaten fresh and used in a salad mix, while larger greens are best lightly wilted or sautéed. Beets can be harvested when they are 1" in diameter, but will remain tender even up to 3-4" in diameter. Once harvested, store beets with the stems cut about 1" above the base. Beets will survive a few light frosts, but harvest before a hard freeze, as they don't keep well after being frozen.

How to Save the Seed:

Beets are biennial, producing seed in their second year. In mild climates, beets can remain in the ground through the winter and will send out a flower stalk during their second year. In harsher climates, beets need to be dug up, stored in a cool dry place, and replanted in the spring, when they will produce a flower stalk. The flowers are wind pollinated – if growing multiple types of beets (or chard) for seed, they will need 2 to 5 miles isolation distance



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between them. You can also isolate using wind-proof cages covering several plants. Save the best 4-6 plants and let go to seed so they cross-pollinate. Once the stalks are brown and dried, harvest the stalks and let dry completely in a cool, dry place for a few days. Remove the seeds from the stalk and winnow the chaff away with a gentle breeze.

Broccoli & Cabbage *Brassica oleracea*

Growing Needs: Annual, full sun, sandy or loamy soil.

Sowing & Growing:

Broccoli & Cabbage are cool season crops. Start seeds indoors 6-8 weeks before last spring frost for a late spring/early summer harvest. Plant seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep. Once seedlings emerge, give plenty of light to prevent the seedlings from getting leggy. When starts have grown 4-5 true leaves and ideally 1 to 2 weeks before the last spring frost, harden off seedlings for a week before transplanting to your garden 12-24" apart.

For Broccoli, closer spacing will produce smaller heads, but a more continuous and greater total harvest. Spacing farther apart will yield a larger primary head and less side shoots.

A late fall crop can be attained by planting (direct seeding or transplanting) in mid to late summer. In milder climates (zone 7 and warmer), broccoli can overwinter for an early to mid-spring harvest. To achieve a mid-spring harvest, plant 4-6 weeks before the average first frost. If you live in a very hot area where your temps are in the upper 90s or higher during the summer, it's good to transplant seedlings for a fall or early spring harvest. Directly seeding may fry the seed if your soil temps are reaching the upper 90s.

Harvesting:

Broccoli is ready to harvest when the head is 4-8" in diameter but before the buds start to open. Cut the main head 5-6" down on the stem and at an angle to let water shed easily and not rot the stalk. Once the main head is

