



URI COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES (CELS) OUTREACH CENTER

3 East Alumni Avenue
Kingston, Rhode Island 02881

For more information:

Call:

In RI: URI MGA Hotline
1-800-448-1011
Mon.-Thurs. 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

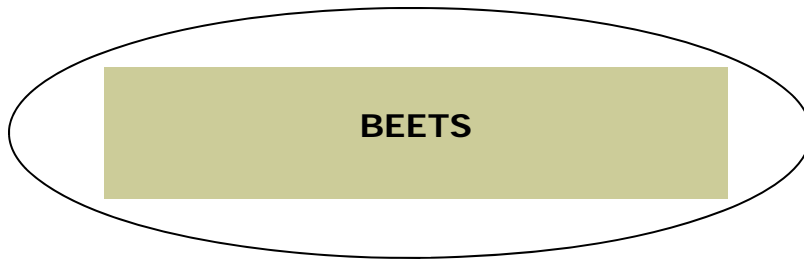
In MA and CT: 401-874-2900

Outside New England please contact Cooperative Extension in your county.

Websites:

URI Master Gardener Association
www.urimga.org

CELS Outreach Center
www.uri.edu/cels/ceo



Beets are relatively easy to grow in the home garden, and practically the whole plant can be eaten. Beets can be grown for their roots – which can come in different shapes and sizes as well as red, yellow, or white colors. The tops, or greens, are excellent in salads when young and can be cooked when the plant is more mature. The greens are even more nutritious than the roots.

Climate Requirements

Beets prefer a cooler climate, although they are tolerant of heat. Temperatures of 60 to 65°F and bright sunny days are ideal for beet plant growth and development. Beets can withstand cold weather short of severe freezing, making them a good long-season crop.

Soils

Beets prefer loose, well-drained soils but will tolerate a wide range. Remove stones and debris that will hinder growth. Beets also make an excellent raised bed crop since soils are generally less compacted and there is less foot traffic. They prefer a soil pH of 6.2 to 6.8 and will tolerate 6.0 to 7.5 – low pH results in stunted growth.

Fertilizers

Fertilizers and lime are best applied using soil test results as a guide. A fertilizer with the analysis of 5-10-10 can be applied at the time of seeding and again when the plants are about three inches tall.

Establishing the Planting

Plant the seeds in a well-prepared seedbed as soon as the soil can be worked in the spring. Sow seeds ½ inch deep and in rows 12 to 18 inches or more apart, depending on the method of cultivation.

Space the seeds, which are actually fruits containing several seeds, one inch apart in the rows. When the seedlings are 1 – 2 inches tall, thin to about one plant per inch. As they grow, thin to about 3 – 4 inches between plants.

Succession planting can be done at three week intervals throughout the season. Avoid seeding when daytime temperatures reach 80°F; wait until it is cooler. Most varieties will mature within 55 to 70 days and can be planted until late summer.

PESTICIDES ARE POISONOUS!! Read and follow all safety precautions on labels. Handle carefully and store in original containers out of reach of children, pets, or livestock. Dispose of empty containers immediately, in a safe manner and place. Pesticides should never be stored with foods or in areas where people eat.

When trade names are used for identification, no product endorsement is implied, nor is discrimination intended against similar materials. Be sure that the pesticide that you wish to use is registered in the state of use.

The user of this information assumes all risk for personal injury or property damage.

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Rhode Island Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.



Note: The Hotline is open Monday—Thursday, 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. from March 1 to November 1.

Culture, Harvesting, and Storage

After plants are well established, application of a mulch will conserve soil moisture, prevent soil compaction, and help suppress weed growth. Any mechanical cultivation should be very shallow in order to avoid damage to the beet roots.

In order to obtain the highest quality, beets must grow continuously. Soil moisture and plant nutrient element supply must be adequately maintained to prevent checking growth. Supplemental watering may be necessary during dry spells.

Principal insect and disease problems of beets are flea beetles, leaf miners, aphids, and *Cercospora* leaf spot. Regular inspection of the crop can help deter a major pest infestation. Row covers at an early stage deter flea beetles and leaf miners.

Beets can be harvested at any time in their growth cycle. Greens are best when 4 – 6 inches tall. Beet roots are generally most tender after growing for 40 to 50 days. The best size is between 1 ½ to 2 inches in diameter. As beets get larger, they tend to become more fibrous. When harvesting, leave at least one inch of foliage on the root to avoid bleeding during cooking. Beets are suited to long-term storage if kept at temperatures near freezing and with high humidity to prevent wilting.

Adapted from Pamela J. Bennett, Ohio State University Extension, 2000