



Commercial Vegetable Recommendations

Red Beets

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Production: 8 to 10 tons per acre for fresh market, 12 to 15 tons per acre for processing.

Use: Most beets are processed. Beets grown for market are either topped in the field and packed in bulk or bunched. Beet tops may be eaten as a green vegetable.

Recommended Varieties: Market: Crosby Green Top (bunching), Detroit Dark Red, Ruby Queen; Processing: Detroit Dark Red, Ruby Queen.

Climatic Requirements

Red beets are a cool season crop that tolerate mild freezes. Beet seed will germinate at 40°F, but optimum germination temperature is 65° to 75°F. Best quality beet roots develop under cool temperatures (55° to 70°F) and sunny days. Beets are planted from early April to late July, and harvested from June to November. Beets for fresh market are usually harvested 60 to 80 days after planting; beets for processing are usually harvested 90 to 110 days after planting.

Soil Requirements

Beets grow well on sandy loam, silt loam, or muck soil. They can be grown on heavy soils, but harvesting is more difficult.

Fertilization

On mineral soils, broadcast and plow or disc in 100 pounds N, 120 pounds P₂O₅, and 120 pounds K₂O per acre in the spring before planting. Sidedress with 50 pounds N, if needed, 4 to 6 weeks after planting. On muck soils, broadcast and disc in 50 pounds N, 50 pounds P₂O₅, and 150 pounds K₂O per acre before planting. Sidedress with N, if needed, 4 to 6 weeks after planting.

Boron deficiency in beets results in black

spots and cavities in the roots. This problem is most common on calcareous, alkaline soils. If needed, apply 3 to 5 pounds of boron (40 to 50 pounds borax) per acre in the broadcast fertilizer.

Manganese deficiency may also be a problem. If needed, add 5 to 10 pounds of manganese sulfate per acre with broadcast fertilizer. If manganese deficiency shows up during the growing season, apply 5 to 10 pounds manganese sulfate per acre as a foliar spray 20 to 30 days after planting.

Spacing and Planting

Beets for market should be planted every 2 weeks for a continuous supply throughout the growing season. Beets are planted ½ to 1 inch deep in rows 12 to 24 inches apart, with 10 to 12 plants per foot of row for market beets (approximately 10 to 12 pounds of seed per acre). For processing beets, plant 15 to 20 plants per foot of row (approximately 20 pounds of seed per acre). Crusting of the soil surface will reduce seedling emergence. Avoid tillage practices that contribute to crusting.

Harvest and Postharvest

Beets for processing and bulk pack for market are harvested and topped by machine. Beets to be bunched are pulled and tied by hand. Topped beets can be stored up to 5 months at 32°F and 90% to 95% relative humidity.

Pests

Good weed control is essential for red beet production. However, beets are very sensitive to herbicides. Care should be taken to stay within recommended rates, or stunting may occur. Leaf miners, flea beetles, and aphids are the main insect pests of beets. Leaf miner damage is usually only a problem on beets for bunching or where tops are to be eaten.

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Beet seedlings are susceptible to damping off and root rots. All seed should be given fungicide treatment.

Since pesticide registrations and regulations are constantly changing, see the latest editions

of Extension Bulletins E-433 "Weed Control Guide for Vegetable Crops" and E-312 "Control of Insects, Diseases, and Nematodes on Commercial Vegetables" for current pest control recommendations.

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