



## Nichols Garden Nursery

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**Herbs, Seeds & Goods  
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**BEETS** - *Beta vulgaris* Swiss chard, garden beets, stock beets, or mangel-wurzels, and sugar beets all belong to the same species (*Beta vulgaris*) The pollen is wind-borne and may pollinate any plant of the same species over long distances. Beets are a home gardener's bonus - freshly harvested half grown roots can be cooked with the tops. Tops are rich in vitamin A and beet roots are a source of folate an antioxidant.

**Planting Recommendations:** Sow seed 1/2" deep in early spring when soil temperature is 60° to 80° with 75° optimum. Plant seed 1 to 1 1/2" deep during warm weather. Can be planted outdoors 3-4 weeks before last frost. Beets grow and produce best in cool weather, mulch the soil if necessary or plant in the shade of other vegetables. Work soil deeply in the spring adding compost or a general garden fertilizer that is low in nitrogen. Thin plants to 2"-3" apart. Keep soil evenly moist at all times. When the plants are young, the tops can be used as 'greens'. For a continuous supply of beets and beet tops make additional sowings every three or four weeks until the end of July. Plant beets again in late summer for a fall crop, sow seed 1" to 1 1/2" deep at this time of year

**Harvesting:** Pull when beet roots are the size you like. Don't worry if you do not pull all the beets before winter; beets will overwinter in the soil much as carrots, until a hard frost in zones 6 to 9. In fact a little cold enhances the flavor.

**History:** Wild beets or chard are believed to have originated in the Mediterranean spreading eastward in prehistoric times. Wild beet leaves were harvested for use as a potherb by people inhabiting the Mediterranean, Asia Minor, the Caucasus and the Near East. The root of the beet was not used or known until the Christian Era. The root of the wild beet was used apparently for medicinal purposes only. The Romans in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries developed recipes for the cooked beet and acquired a taste for them claiming cooked beets better than cabbage. Red Beets showed up in English recipes in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and in the German diet around 1558. When it finally made its way into northern Europe and France the beet was often referred to as Roman

Beet which would indicate that it was introduced via Italy. The garden beet remained insignificant through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Only two kinds of beets, Red and Long Red were listed in English catalogs until after 1800. Popularity grew faster in the United States. Early in the 1800's only Red Beet was listed in catalogs, but after 1828 four varieties made their way into the American vegetable gardens. Today beets are a common vegetable of different colors and shapes; some have concentric rings of color, others grow an elongated root, or a small to medium sized round beet deep burgundy red, red beets and even Golden Beets.

### **General Planting Info**

Planting Depth: 1/2 " in cool weather, 1-1 1/2" in warm weather

Germination Temp: 60°-80° , 75° optimum

Days to Germinate: 5-10

Growing Soil Temp: 60°-75°

Spacing: 3"

Planting Location: Full Sun

### **Planting Notes:**

Seeds per ounce: Approx. 1500-2000

Seeds per gram: Approx. 50-70

5 gram packet plants 10 ft.—1 oz. plants 50 ft.

### **BEET, FRUIT AND CHARD SALAD**

Swiss Chard braised in a little olive oil and garlic. The chard stems and garlic are cooked for three minutes before coarsely chopped leaves are added.

Our other ingredients :

2 medium baked beets

1 orange, peeled

1 mango, peeled

1 tablespoon wine vinegar

1 tablespoon walnut oil

1/4 cup crumbled goat or feta cheese

1/4 cup chopped parsley salt to taste

Slice beets, orange and mango into a dish. Dress with vinegar and oil. Layer over greens, sprinkle first with parsley and then cheese. A few added walnuts would be good. Another version for beet and salad would be sliced pears and a sprinkling of dried cranberries.