

## Beetroot

*(Beta vulgaris)*

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### SOWING

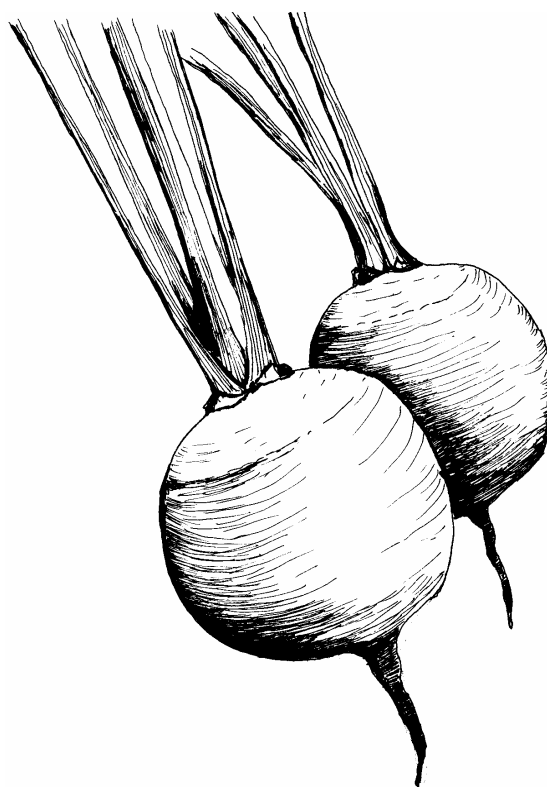
Beetroots are a cooler season crop. The first sowing can be in April and continue until July. The "seeds" are actually fruits and a number of plants will develop from each one. These have to be thinned out to allow for good root development. Thinnings can be transplanted into other rows. Sow the seeds direct 1.5-2 cm deep in rows 35-40 cm apart. When the seedlings are 5 cm high they are thinned out to 10 cm between plants. Germination is greatly speeded up if the seed is soaked in water over night before planting. Soil must be deeply dug and worked to a good tilth at the same time removing all stones as poor soil preparation results in misshapen roots. Weed control is important for good yields, but care must be taken not to disturb the soil too far below the surface or root damage may result. If the shoulders of the beetroot become exposed, it is advisable to cover them with a layer of soil to prevent greening.

### FERTILISER

As with most root crops it is not advisable to add fresh animal manure to the soil as this can adversely affect quality of the roots. The bed should be limed at 100-150 g/m<sup>2</sup> well in advance of planting. This can be followed seven to 10 days before planting by working 50-60 g/m<sup>2</sup> of a mixed fertiliser into the rows. Side dress with sulphate of ammonia at 20 g/m<sup>2</sup> or with urea at half this rate when the plants are two to three weeks old.

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