

# Trumpet Vine

A Bi-monthly Publication for the Master Gardeners of Cuyahoga County

## 2018 Is the Year of the Beet!

*The National Garden Bureau*

From humble beginnings around the Mediterranean, the table beet (*Beta Vulgaris*) has spread to all continents save Antarctica. Historically, beets have been consumed in many ways: medicinally in ancient Rome, fresh (both the greens and the roots) in salads, made into soups (think borscht), pickled slices and shreds--to name a few.



[www.familyfoodgarden.com](http://www.familyfoodgarden.com)

Yes, sugar beets (a rough, white cone-shaped relative) are of the same family but are mostly grown commercially for sugar production, since sugar beets require much less water to produce than sugar cane.

Beets are high in fiber, vitamins A and C and have more iron than most vegetables. They are also rich in antioxidants, calcium, potassium, phosphorous and folic acid. A beet's red color comes from an antioxidant called betalain, which was used as an ingredient in makeup that produced the "red as a beet" coloring and saying. Betalain is an excellent source of red color pigment and can be used as natural dyes or food coloring agents.

### How to Grow

Although beets are a biannual crop (they flower in the second year of growth), the roots can be grown annually in 50-95 days, depending on climate and desired root size. Plant seeds directly into the soil, 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep and 1-2 inches apart in rows or blocks, and keep evenly moist to encourage germination. Beet "seeds" are actually little clusters of 2-4 seeds. Thin out (and be sure to eat) seedlings by pinching or snipping when they are 1-2 inches tall to encourage larger well-shaped roots for harvest. After thinning, plants should be spaced about 3 inches apart. They prefer slightly acidic soils with some boron content and limited nitrogen. Beets like about an inch of water per week. They will tolerate cool temperatures and are usually planted in the spring or early fall and can withstand cooler temps before harvest.

Roots are normally harvested either by gently pulling the tops or digging the roots when they are about 2 ½” to 3” in diameter (but can be harvested larger or small as desired). Root size is strongly determined by sowing density. Beets grow well in containers also.



Avalanche Beets  
[www.gurneys.com](http://www.gurneys.com)

Beets are typically red to purple in color, both internally and externally, but some varieties are yellow or red with white rings internally, like 'Touchstone Gold' and 'Chioggia Guardsmark.' 'Avalanche,' a recent AAS winner, is pure white and very sweet.

Beetroot has a reputation of having an "earthy" taste that some love and some do not. New hybrid varieties have a much milder flavor and higher sugar content attracting new American fans. Enjoy!

[www.ngb.org](http://www.ngb.org)