

BEETS

Educator | VermontHarvestoftheMonth.org

Harvest of the Month provides resources for the cafeteria, classroom, and community to promote the use of local, seasonal foods.



History of Beets

Beets are native to the shores of North Africa, Europe and the Middle East; they were first cultivated by the ancient Romans. In the 19th century, when it was found that beets could be converted into sugar, the crop's commercial value significantly grew. Beets are a member of the Amaranthaceae family, along with chard, quinoa and spinach. This root vegetable comes in an array of colors, including: deep red, red and white striped, orange, golden yellow and purple.

Fun Facts

- Betanin is the pigment that gives beets their deep purple-red color; it is known for its cancer-fighting properties.
- Beet juice can be used as a natural dye!
- Beet greens are also edible.

Reading Corner

- » *Tops and Bottoms*, by Janet Stevens
- » *The Big Beet*, by Lynn Ward

Varieties of Beets

Detroit Dark Red, Early Wonder Tall Top, Forono, Chioggia, Touchstone Gold

Benefits

- Beet leaves are an excellent source of potassium and a good source of vitamin B9 (folic acid) and the mineral magnesium.
- Beet roots are an excellent source of vitamin A and the mineral potassium; they are a good source of vitamin C, B2 (riboflavin) and magnesium.

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CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Art | *Painting with Beet Juice*

Supplies needed:

Paintbrushes, paper, containers for water and paint, cooking pot, blender, strainer and a diversity of beet varieties.

Directions:

1. Cook beets, blend, strain and mix with water to create paint.
2. Beet juice stains easily, so have children wear smocks, if possible.
3. This is a great opportunity to teach students about shading: the more water you add, the lighter the paint becomes.

Source: GMFTS

Math | *Measuring Beets*

Supplies needed:

Various-sized & types of beets, measuring devices (ruler, string, scale), handout for recording measurements.

Directions:

1. Place a few beets at each table.
2. Measure the length, width, diameter, circumference, radius and weight.
3. Have students record their findings; as a class, make a chart that compares and contrasts the different beet varieties

Source: GMFTS

Science | *Sprout a Beet*

Supplies needed:

Beets, bowls or saucers, sand, soil, water, knife, handout for tracking growth in various conditions.

Directions:

1. Cut the root, so a ½ inch remains; cut the stems (if still attached), so a ½ inch remains.
2. Press a beet, root facing down, into each set-up: sand, soil and water; the sand and soil should be ~½ inch deep and the water ~¼ inch deep.
3. Place in a window with good light. Soon, leaves will begin to sprout from the tops of the beets.
4. Have students observe the growth of the leaves over time.

Source: Upper Valley Farm-to-School, GMFTS.

