PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Beta vulgaris subsp. cicla* (L.) W. D. J. Koch

**GENUS** *Beta* **FAMILY** Amaranthaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Silver beet

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Leaves, Vegetable

The leaves and stalks are cooked and eaten.
The leaf stalks can be cut from the leaf and cooked separately as an asparagus substitute. They can be braised and served with buttered bread crumbs. The leaves are used for sarma in Turkey. They are rolled around a filling of rice or minced meat.
Some kinds have edible roots.

## DESCRIPTION

A broad leafed annual plant. Stalks are smooth and often white with a dark green leaf. A clump of stalks and leaves are produced from the base. Plants can also be blue. The leaves can be 12-25 cm long. The flowers are small and greenish. They are in slender clusters. The fruit are dry and spiny.

## HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It needs to be over at least 500 m altitude in the tropics. It is mostly grown between 1000 and 2600 m altitude. It can tolerate frost.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

It is grown from seeds. Under tropical conditions it is not normally possible to save your own seed. In cold climates plants need to be sown when conditions are warmer so that plants do not go straight to flower. A spacing of 30 cm between plants is suitable. Seed are sown 2.5 cm deep.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

The first leaves are ready after 8-10 weeks and can produce for 2 years. Only the outer leaves are picked off.

## NOTES

Probably all Beta are one species and 2 main forms - Cicla - for leaves, and Contiva - for roots.
Also put in the family Chenopodiaceae.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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