Sugar Beet Planting Instructions

These recommendations can be helpful if you are considering sugar beets as a supplement in your food plot.

1. Planting Food Plots: Optimum soil temps of at least 55° F. Plant soon after the danger of a killing frost is over.
   *Spring Planting: Early April – Early June depending on location.

2. Sugar beets prefer a heavier loam or clay soil. Condition the soil with a disc, chisel plow or similar equipment to prepare a good seed bed as early as possible so weeds have a chance to begin growing. Spray with Roundup two weeks before planting.

3. Drag the seed bed with a drag or chain link fence to further prep the soil.

4. Soil should be fertile with a pH of 6.5 to 7.5. If you are not sure of your soils fertility or pH, have your soil tested. Your local farm co-op or fertilizer dealer can usually help with this.
   *A good fertilizer recommendation is 300-400 lbs of 19-19-19 followed by an application of 100lbs/acre of urea (46-0-0) after 6-8 weeks

5. Broadcast 8-10 lbs or drill 5-8 lbs sugar beet seed per acre. If broadcasting, lightly incorporate seed into the soil with a drag or light cultivator. This rate can be reduced proportionately if blended with Alfalfa, Clover or other seed.

6. Simply set the broadcaster to 2 on most spreaders or about ¼ inch (better to have setting set smaller and overlap than to run out of seed).

7. Drag the seed bed and cover the seed with ¼ - ½ inch of top soil.

8. Use a cultipacker, roller, or your ATV tires to pack the field to insure good seed/soil contact.

9. Wait for rain! Sugar beets require 12 to 18 inches of moisture during a 5 month growing season.

   Note Sugar beets can take 2-3 weeks to germinate and emerge after planting. The first stage of beet growth is the canopy or tops. This will be the main growth phase for 4-5 weeks. Then the root growth will become the primary growth phase and that will continue for the next several months until they reach maturity.

Weed Control for Your Sugar Beets

Sugar beets can be a finicky crop to grow and they do not do well with weed competition, especially when a seedling. Sometimes several applications of herbicides are needed.

As with all food plots it is always easiest and cheapest to start with a weed free seed bed using glyphosate (Roundup). For sugar beets, till the soil in the Fall or as early in the Spring as possible. Then spray emerging vegetation 2 weeks before planting your sugar beets.

To control grasses after germination, use a grass selective herbicide such as Select or Poast. Spray when grasses are about 2” tall. You may have to spray again in 5-6 weeks.

Controlling broadleaf weeds after germination is more difficult and can be costly. 8-10 oz of Betamix is an option but it is expensive.

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