

# COOKING GREEN

## Growing Your Own Organic Food

by Kay Bushnell

Folks who decide to include more organic vegetables and fruits in their meals are often motivated to grow some of their own food. They start by finding a local resource that specializes in helping home gardeners grow their own organic food. It helps if the resource, which usually includes a garden store, offers classes on organic gardening and supplies for home gardeners. If you're lucky you'll find a center with an informal atmosphere and friendly, knowledgeable staff that welcomes both experienced and novice gardeners.

Whether you'll be gardening an apartment balcony or on acres of land try to purchase only the supplies you will need. Look for a garden supply store that sells seeds in amounts as small as a spoonful as well as heirloom gardening tools, organically grown vegetable starts, and organic herb plants. Organic fertilizer, compost, potting soil, and soil amendments are most convenient when they are sold in bulk as well as in bags

Once you find the right organic garden supply center you'll be motivated to return year after year, especially if the staff has a helpful attitude and the center offers informational materials. If you have a question about gardening you'll want to feel free to talk with the staff or consult helpful resources such as horticultural reference books and active bulletin board postings.

Among the jars of seeds available at organic gardening stores are those for the common red beet, a vegetable that can be grown easily in local gardens. Very fresh beets with crisp green tops can provide the fixings for two dishes. Slice off the greens, rinse them well, and chop them coarsely. Then in an inch of water in a small skillet cover them and simmer the greens until they are tender. Sprinkle them with a little olive oil before serving. Use the red beet roots in the following delicious Red Velvet Soup, which makes a stunning presentation at any meal. Its rich, red color makes it one of the most beautiful of all soups, and its flavor is equally outstanding.