



## Swiss Chard

Choose a site that gets full sun (partial shade in hot regions). Chard prefers well-drained soil that's rich in organic matter and high in nitrogen, with a pH of 6.0 to 6.8 (see "How to Have Your Soil Tested," under Related eHow's). Work well-composted manure into the soil to boost its nitrogen level.

Sow seeds directly into the ground one to two weeks before the last expected frost. In mild climates you can also plant in autumn for winter and early-spring harvests. Sow seeds 1/2 inch deep and 4 inches apart. They'll germinate in about a week if the soil temperature is 60 degrees F.

Thin the plants when they're about 6 inches tall; either eat the young greens or replant them elsewhere in the garden. Leave 8 to 10 inches between plants, a little less if you plan to pick leaves often or if you want a denser look in an ornamental planting.

Mulch to suppress weeds and conserve moisture. About four weeks after planting, water plants with manure tea.

Provide an inch of water a week, especially in hot weather. Drought-stressed plants are prone to bolt (flower and go to seed prematurely), and both stalks and leaves will turn fibrous and bitter. If a flower stalk appears, clip it off to prolong the harvest.

Begin harvesting single leaves when they're 5 to 6 inches long. If you harvest plants regularly, they'll continue to produce new growth at the center.

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