

# CHARD

Swiss chard is not only one of the most popular vegetables along the Mediterranean, but it is also one of the most nutritious. Commonly grown for its leaves and stalks, Chard is one of the easiest vegetables to grow and can be harvested all summer long with a taste comparable to spinach. Unlike Spinach, chard rarely goes to seed the first season, so it is much easier to grow and its harvest window is an amazing 4-5 months. Sometimes we are lucky to get 3-4 weeks out of spinach before it bolts to seed. An added bonus when growing chard is it's beautiful appearance; Bright Lights looks amazing in the flowerbeds as a tall, colorful accent!

## SOIL PREPARATION

Swiss Chard prefer a sandy soil, rich in organic matter, well drained, and not too heavy. They also need full sun exposure. Before planting, incorporate 1-2 inches of well composted organic matter, Humic, and 1 lb. of all-purpose fertilizer (we recommend "That's all it Takes" complete fertilizer or Happy Frog Organic Tomato & Vegetable Food) per 100 square feet and work them in to a depth of 4-6 inches. Heavy, clay-based soils must be amended with compost and organic matter to encourage and allow for good root development. For best results, add 2-4 inches of a variety of different types of organic matter and 50 lbs. of Zeolite soil conditioner per 100 square feet each fall for multiple years to increase drainage and nutrient availability. By doing this yearly, over time you can create a better growing environment for your garden plants to thrive in and produce. Please consult our Soil Preparation Guide in the attached appendix.

## PLANTING

Swiss Chard is almost always grown from seed and can be sown directly outside anytime after the soils reach 40 degrees. We do occasionally offer transplants from our greenhouse in early April through May. Optimal seed germination is at 55-75 degrees, so the best time to plant in Cache Valley is in April and May, and again in August and September for a fall crop. Plant seeds about 1/4-1/2 inch deep and cover with a light mulch, potting soil or Coconut Coir to prevent soil crusting and to help retain moisture. Try to maintain uniform soil moisture for 7-10 days or until the seeds begin to emerge. As the seedlings begin to grow, thin the plants out to 2-3 inches apart in the rows, and 12-18 inches between rows.

## VARIETIES:

Anderson's carries several excellent chard varieties. Fordhook has attractive, crumpled, and dark green leaves attached to broad, delicate, pale white 8-10 inch stalks that are wonderfully tender and juicy. Overall the plants reach 22 inches. Perpetual chard has fine textured spinach-like leaves with much smaller stems than other chards. It is suitable for high-density plantings and withstands high temperatures. Unlike other chards, the stalk color is green rather than white or red. Bright Lights, our most popular variety, develops multi-colored stems (red, white, yellow, pink) with a tender texture and tasty flavor. Rhubarb is an attractive and delicious variety with crimson colored stalks that somewhat resemble rhubarb in color and shape, and dark green leaves that are slightly crumpled. It is easy to grow and rich in vitamin content. 60 days to harvest.



## WATER

Chard needs regular water and consistent soil moisture to produce well. Use of a soaker hose and light mulches can assist in maintaining correct soil moisture and guaranteeing a healthy harvest. We recommend about 1-2 inches of water applied per week in 2-3 applications.

## FERTILIZER

About 4-6 weeks after germination, apply a balanced vegetable food ("That's All it Takes" or Happy Frog Organic Tomato & Vegetable Food) down the side of the row of plants and water thoroughly. 1-2 cups per 10 feet of row works well. For more leafy greens, use a higher nitrogen fertilizer like 21-0-0. We recommend the Tomato & Vegetable Food because it contains many micro-nutrients (like Boron & Iron) that prevent common problems in developing chard.

We also recommend treating your Swiss Chard seed or plants with beneficial microbes and mycorrhizae (Kangaroots or Myke). These added helpers bring nutrients and water directly to the plants that host them, making them stronger, more resistant to insects and diseases, and more drought tolerant.

## COMMON PROBLEMS

Chard does not compete well with weeds and therefore weed control is vital to its success. Hand weed when necessary, and use pre-emergent weed controls (Treflan or Corn Gluten) after germination to prevent new weed emergence. Flea beetles and leaf miners commonly attack Swiss Chard and leave distinctive damage behind that can alert the observant gardener to their presence. Several safe and effective chemical and organic controls are available to stop these pests before they start - Ferti-lome

<b>CHARD</b>	
<b>PLANTING TIME</b>	Group B, E
<b>PLANTING METHOD</b>	Rows
<b>PLANT SPACING</b>	3-6"
<b>ROW SPACING</b>	2-3'
<b>SEED DEPTH</b>	1/4-1/2"
<b>TIME TO HARVEST</b>	45-65 Days
<b>WATER NEEDS</b>	1", 3x weekly
<b>TRANSPLANT/DIRECT SOW</b>	Direct
<b>SPECIAL ISSUES</b>	Weeds Leaf Miners, Flea Beetles Late season heat causes bolting

Spinosad Soap is an excellent organic choice, and Ferti-lome Triple Action works quickly and safely to stop a wide variety of insects. Deer absolutely love Swiss Chard, so if entire sections of your chard disappear at night, you may have some nocturnal visitors to discourage. Netting, wire, fencing, and Deer Stopper sprays have helped us protect and preserve our chard crop.

### HARVESTING:

About 8 weeks after sowing, cut off outer stalks near the base, allowing the center stalks to continue growing. Cut the leaves off about 2 inches above the ground. Yields about 8-12 lbs per 10-foot row. Swiss chard can be stored 1-2 weeks when refrigerated. If you decide to harvest the entire plant, leave the root system, fertilize with a water-soluble fertilizer (Grow Big or Baicor All Purpose) and in a few weeks it will be back, good as new. There really isn't another crop that is so versatile and productive as Swiss chard.



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