

RHUBARB

This deliciously tart plant is most often used with other fruits in pies and sauces. Because it has large interesting leaves and bright red stalks, it can be grown in a perennial bed to add to your yearly show or in a permanent spot in your vegetable garden. Wherever you decide to plant make sure you give it enough room to grow. Most varieties will grow to be around 3' tall and up to 6' wide! If after many growing seasons your plant is outgrowing its location, you can dig up the thick tubers and split the plant.

GROWING

All rhubarb varieties need full sun (at least 8 hours/day) but will tolerate some shade in the afternoon. In our area you will want to prep your planting bed by working 3-4 inches of soil building compost into the soil using a tiller or by hand. This will help lighten up our clay soils and add nutrients beneficial to getting your plants well established. Space your plants out at least 3' but closer to 6' would be better in the long run. Add a mild, balanced fertilizer at the time of planting, like a 16-16-16 or Ferti-lome Gardener's Special Fertilizer. Since rhubarb has large leaves it needs regular deep waterings. Use a drip system or a slow trickle from your hose to water your plants, and try not to sprinkle the leaves as this will encourage fungal growth on the leaves and stalks. In the fall, remove the dead foliage before snowfall.

FERTILIZER

Apply 1 cup of "That's All it Takes" complete fertilizer or Happy Frog Organic Tomato & Vegetable Food to each plant when the growth begins. Manure is an excellent fertilizer for rhubarb, but should not cover the plant, and should not be applied when the plant is young as it could cause burning and root rot.

VARIETIES

The Crimson Red is a red rhubarb that produces delicious, fleshy, sweet, thick stalks that do not lose their color when cooked. Valentine is best suited for northern growing areas. Other varieties include Victoria (green stalk, red blush), Glaskin's Perpetual (green stalk), Crimson Cherry (red stalk, never stringy), and Canada Red (red stalk, produces fewer, but high quality stalks).

PESTS/DISEASES

On struggling plants you may encounter aphids, leaf hoppers and flea beetles. These can be taken care of easily by treating with Ferti-lome Triple Action or another insecticide registered for use on rhubarb. Always read the label to ensure that you are applying your insecticide correctly. Crown rot can be a problem in heavy clay soils, or with over watering. Adding compost to your soil on a regular basis and watering properly will help avoid this problem.



COMMON PROBLEMS

Keep the weeds to a minimum with the use of plastic and organic mulches. We prefer the Dewitt Pro 5 weed barrier as it allows water and nutrients to pass through, but stops even the most difficult weeds as they germinate. Treflan and Corn Gluten weed preventative herbicides are also very effective ways to stop weeds before they start, saving you hours and hours of weeding. Be sure to control weeds when they are small to prevent damage to the developing rhubarb. Few insects bother rhubarb, but beware of the Rhubarb curculio. To eliminate these bugs, handpick the adults and remove other broad leaf weeds from the area. Avoid the Potato Stem Borer and Mites with Ferti-lome Triple Action Insecticide that is safe and effective for all types of edible plants. To avoid fungal leaf spot, avoid wetting the foliage when watering and eliminate weeds surrounding the plant to allow more circulation. You can also, if necessary, cut out diseased parts of the plant to prevent the disease from spreading.

HARVEST

No matter how tempting, do not harvest any stalks from your new plants for at least two growing seasons. This will allow your plants root system to become established and add to the overall harvest in the following years. Depending on the age of your stand, you can harvest these tart stalks for 4 to 5 weeks during the early spring. To harvest, grasp the stalk at the base and pull sideways and outwards. Resist cutting the stalks as this will encourage decay. Never remove all the leaf stalks from your plants and stop harvesting when slender stalks start to appear. If any bloom stalks appear remove them immediately. Bloom stalks are slender spikes of small insignificant flowers and look very different from the leaves. By removing the blooms you will encourage more leafy growth. Do not eat the leaves!

<u>RHUBARB</u>	
PLANTING TIME	Group b & C
PLANTING METHOD	Rows
PLANT SPACING	4-5'
ROW SPACING	5-6'
PLANT DEPTH	To soil level
TIME TO HARVEST	1 year after transplant
WATER NEEDS	1" weekly
<u>RHUBARB</u>	
TRANSPLANT/DIRECT SOW	Tansplant



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