



Garden Talk

Growing Rhubarb

“Where People who Love Rhubarb, Love to Shop!”™

It is best to grow rhubarb in full sun, but is tolerant of partial shade. Plants remain in the same position for up to 10 years and the soil immediately surrounding the plant should not be dug, so plant with this in mind.

Soil Preparation - Rhubarb is tolerant of most soil conditions, but grows best in soil dug to a depth of 18 inches or more. Incorporate as much organic mulch and compost as possible during this process because it must last the life of the plant. Manure is not recommended because of the risk of bulb rot. Be especially careful to remove all weeds at the preparation stage.

When To Plant - Rhubarb can be grown either from seed, or as plants & root divisions purchased from the garden center. The problem with rhubarb grown from seed is it takes years longer to produce stalks and even then plants are not guaranteed to be true to type. It is a gamble which takes three years before succeeded or failure is realized. It is definitely better to plant from root divisions or plants from the garden center.

How To Plant - After preparing the soil, plant the root division with the crown one inch below the soil surface. Fill in around the plant with soil gently firming down to ensure no air pockets remain. Water well with a mixture of water & Watters "**Root Stimulator**". Water every two weeks until leaves begin to show in 4-6 weeks.

Spread Watters "**Mulch**" around the plants, but not directly over the crown. Three plants should be sufficient to meet most families needs. Space plants about 2 feet apart.

Best Care - With the proper care rhubarb will produce much finer stalks than neglected plants. Every year after the leaves have died down, spread a new layer of garden compost or Watters



"**Mulch**" over the roots. This will conserve water and prevent weeds. In dry

periods give the plants a deep watering. In March sprinkle a handful of Watters "**All Natural Plant Food**" around the plants. Brighter stalks occur in summer with an application of organic "**Soil Activator**" in early July. Remove any weeds as they appear.

The only other attention required would be to cut off flower heads which may appear in early spring as the new rhubarb stalks emerge. Do this as soon as possible, if flower heads are left to grow and seed the plant may not fully recover.

Dividing - Rhubarb which is five years old can be dug up and split into three to four separate plants. The time to do this is late autumn after the leaves have died down. Dig plants with as much of the root as possible. Using a spade or saw make sure each portion has pink growing buds showing. Plant the new root divisions immediately.

The Harvest - Tempting though it may be, do not pull any stems during the first season; this would seriously weaken the plant. Let plants grow to establish a good healthy root system. During the second season harvest only two stems per plant at any one time leaving five healthy stems always remain. In subsequent years pull three or four stems at a time always leaving three or four.

Harvest occurs May through August. Select the largest stalks waiting for leaves to fully open before pulling. Stalks are taken by gently pulling the stalk as low as possible to the base of the plant and at the same time twisting. The leaves can go in the compost bin. Do NOT eat the leaves they are poisonous.

Pests and Diseases

Rhubarb is very strong and suffers from few diseases or pests. The only potential problem comes from 'crown rot'.

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