

## Home Gardening Series

# Chard

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### Environment

**Light** – sunny  
**Soil** – well-drained  
**Fertility** – medium  
**pH** – 6.0 to 7.0  
**Temperature** – cool-warm  
**Moisture** – moist

### Culture

**Planting** – direct seed spring or fall  
**Spacing** – 2-4 x 36 inches, thin  
**Hardiness** – cool-season hardy  
**Fertilizer** – medium feeder

### Chard – *Beta vulgaris cicla*

Chard (also known as Swiss chard) is a member of the beet family that can be successfully grown as a green vegetable. It is planted early because the seedlings are tolerant to moderate frost.

Chard produces fresh greens throughout the summer. The large, fleshy leafstalks may be white or red with broad, crisp, green leaf blades. Like beet greens, Swiss chard is a good source of vitamins A and C. The leaf blades are prepared like spinach, and the midribs (or stalks) may be cooked in the same way as asparagus. Chard is also an attractive ornamental that adds to the beauty of a garden. Many gardeners like to grow chard because it is usually not available in food markets and yields well with few production problems.



### Cultural Practices

#### Planting Time

Chard does well on any soil where lettuce and spinach grow. Grow chard as you would beets. Plants may be started inside and transplanted in the garden after the danger of frost is past, but most gardeners plant seed directly into the garden in April and early May.

#### Spacing and Depth of Planting

For seeding outdoors, plant seed 1/2 to 3/4 inch deep (8 to 10 seed per foot of row) in rows far enough apart to cultivate. Thin the seedlings to 4 to 6 inches apart. An alternative method is to thin the seedlings to 2 to 3 inches apart, then harvest the excess plants when they are sufficiently large for greens (6 to 8 inches high), leaving a

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## Cultivars

Variety	Days to Maturity	Seed/100 Ft of Row	Disease Resistance or Tolerance	Remarks
Fordhook Giant	60	2 oz		Large leaf ribs or stalks. White stems.
Lucullus	60	2 oz		Heat tolerant. White stems.
Bright Lights	55	2 oz		AAS, multicolored stems.
Rhubarb	60	2 oz		Red stems, glossy green, crinkled leaves.
Orea	60	2 oz		Golden stems. Dark green leaves.

Abbreviation: **AAS**: All American Selection

final spacing of 9 to 12 inches between plants. Set the transplants 9 to 12 inches apart in the garden.

### Harvesting

The most common method of harvesting chard is to cut off the outer leaves 1 1/2 inches above the ground while they are young and tender (about 8 to 12 inches long). Be careful not to damage the terminal bud.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. When should Swiss chard be planted in my garden?

A. Since Swiss chard is a close relative of beets, plant it the same time you do beets. Seeds should be planted two to three weeks before the average last killing spring frost.

### Q. How should Swiss chard be harvested?

A. Swiss chard is grown for its tender leaves. The mature plants grow 1 to 2 feet tall, and the crinkled leaves have prominent central ribs. These ribs can be cut from the rest of the leaves and cooked and served like asparagus. The remainder of the leaf is eaten as greens. For harvesting, cut the leaves at the base of the plant with a sharp knife. The undisturbed inner leaves should continue to grow and be ready for picking in a few days. Discard any old leaves. If they remain on the plant, they decrease production.

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