

# Swiss Chard

***Swiss chard can be grown easily in most gardens.***

**T**his green, cold season vegetable has good heat resistance, too, so it's truly a year round vegetable.

The large, fleshy leaf stalks can be white or red, with broad, crisp, green leaf blades. The leaf blades can be cooked like spinach or other greens, and the midribs or stalks can be cooked like asparagus. In many ways, Swiss chard is similar to Chinese cabbage. It's an attractive plant and can be planted in ornamental flower beds because it's so pretty. But, if you want Swiss chard, you'll have to grow it. It's not available in most markets.

## **An easy-to-care-for-vegetable...**

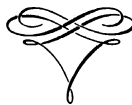
Soil preparation and fertilization of Swiss chard is easy. Loosen the soil with a shovel. Dig 8 to 10 inches deep, or as deep as the shovel will go. Add a four-inch layer of leaves and mix it with the soil, using the shovel. Be sure to break up all clumps. Work the soil when it is moist, not too wet or dry.

## **Fertilize and side dress...**

Put down a handful or one cup of 8-8-8 fertilizer for each 10 feet of row. Put it where the rows will be and rake up the row on top of it. Make raised beds so that the 8-8-8 is under them. Make rows three feet wide. Side dress the plants when they are about 6 to 8 inches tall, using one-half teaspoon of ammonium nitrate or ammonium sulfate for each plant. Water it in well. Side dress regularly, about every four to six weeks. This will keep plants growing well for a long time.

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*Seeds or young plants can be planted in the fall, early winter, late winter and spring. Chard will produce fresh greens even through the summer. It's an excellent choice for small gardens.*



## **Plant seeds generously.**

Plant seeds thick, then cook the greens that you thin out. Seeds do best if they're planted about one-fourth to one-half inch deep, with about 8 to 10 seeds per foot. After thinning, the young plants should be about 9 to 12 inches apart. If you're setting out transplants, space them about 9 to 12 inches apart.

## **Cultivate often and very shallow...**

Better still, control weeds by using mulches; leaves, thick layers of newspapers, or other organic mulches. If a few weeds come up, you can pull them while they're still small.

## **Harvest carefully...**

The best way to harvest Swiss chard is to "crop" it, which is cutting off only the outer leaves about one inch above the ground while they are young and tender. It's best to cut chard. Pulling the leaves can damage the entire plant. The entire plants are harvested only during the thinning stage, when they're only 6 to 8 inches tall.

To extend the harvest of Swiss chard, pick only the recently matured leaves instead of the entire plant. A combination of Swiss chard and collards in your garden will give you greens all year.

If you're thinking of planting Swiss chard this year, consider these varieties: *Red Mid-rib, Burgundy, Ruby, Rhubarb, White Mid-rib, Fordhook Giant, Geneve, Large White Broad-rib and Perpetual.*

***For more information on Swiss chard contact your local County Extension Office.***