

## Chard



Chard can be eaten when young in salads or later in stir-fry. The stalk and ribs are also edible and resembles celery. Chard is an excellent source of vitamins A and C and adds great beauty to the garden.

Swiss chard, a member of the beet family, is known by a host of other names including silverbeet, perpetual spinach, spinach beet, sekale beet, crab beet and mangold.

Swiss chard is an attractive, leafy vegetable with a red stalk that produces an abundance of fresh greens all summer long, though many other varieties offer other colours, such as yellow.

Chard reaches a mature height of 1 to 2 feet and is relatively easy to sow from seed or transplants.

It can be planted early in the season, as the seedlings are tolerant to frost. Swiss chard likes organic-rich, well-drained soil and plenty of sun.

Chard can be harvested while the leaves are young and tender (smaller than 4 inches) or after maturity. Once you have begun your Swiss chard harvest, the plants can be continually harvested up until it frosts.

If you desire a fresh addition to a tossed salad, you can snip Swiss chard leaves when they are very small. Larger pieces of chard can be cut and used in stir-fry dishes. As long as chard is cut it will produce more leaves. Stalks and ribs can also be cooked and eaten like asparagus.

The most common method for how to pick chard is to cut off the outer leaves 1 ½ to 2 inches above the ground while they are young and tender (about 8 to 12 inches long). Older leaves are often stripped off the plants and discarded to allow the young leaves to continue to grow. Be careful not to damage the terminal bud. Provided the growing point is not damaged, all leaves can be cut off to within 2 inches of the soil. Harvesting chard is best done with a clean and sharp pair of garden scissors or a knife. Sever leaves at the base of the plant. New leaves will grow quickly. Swiss chard can be stored for one to two weeks if refrigerated.

### **Varieties**

**‘Bright Yellow’:** Bright golden-yellow stalks (petioles) with mid-green puckered leaves.

**‘Charlotte’:** Striking red stems and veins, upright leaves and neat habit.

**‘Fordhook Giant’:** Attractive shiny green, puckered leaves with long succulent white stalks (petioles).

**‘Lucullus’:** Plenty of tender, light green leaves with long succulent white stalks (petioles).

