How to Grow Your Own Rhubarb

Rhubarb is one of the easiest edible plants to grow. It’s frost-resistant and doesn’t need much care and attention. You can grow rhubarb from seed, but it’s much easier to plant a dormant crown. These are taken from strong plants and will establish faster. Alternatively you can buy pot-grown rhubarb.

Rhubarb will grow happily in a container, but it has a large root system and will need a deep pot.

**Planting**

- Prepare the soil by digging in plenty of organic matter like compost or well-rotted manure
- Dig a hole wider than the crown. Spread out the roots and plant so the tip of the crown is just above the soil level
- Fill in the hole with soil and water well
- If planting pot-grown rhubarb, plant as above and keep well-watered

**How to look after me**

- **Soil:** Moist but well-drained
- **Position:** Sunny
- **Location:** Outdoors, container

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**David’s Top Tip**

If you already have rhubarb in your garden, why not try forcing it? Clear the ground of weeds in late winter and cover the plant with a large pot or dustbin to block out all the light. It should be ready to harvest eight weeks later. Never force a plant two years in a row as it weakens the crown.

Find more guides and a planting calendar at [daviddomoney.com/guides](http://daviddomoney.com/guides)
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Growing

- In spring, remove the flowers as they appear. That way the rhubarb will put all its energy into producing tasty stems, instead of making seeds.
- Boost plants with a general fertiliser in spring.
- Keep the soil clear of weeds.
- Apply a mulch of well-rotted manure or other rich organic matter to the soil. Keep the mulch clear of the crown to avoid crown rot.
- Water rhubarb during dry spells to make sure the soil doesn’t dry out.
- Watering is especially important for rhubarb in containers.
- When the leaves die back naturally in autumn, cut the old stalks back to expose the buds, and apply a layer of mulch.
- Every five or so years, lift and divide the crowns into three or four smaller plants.
- If you don’t divide large plants, they will become congested and produce less stems.

Did You Know?

Strictly speaking, rhubarb is a vegetable and not a fruit! It’s related to the buckwheat family.

Harvesting

- Harvest rhubarb when the leaves have fully unfurled and the stems are around 30cm long.
- Hold the stem at the base and pull it gently but firmly away from the crown. Do not bend or the stem may snap.
- Do not remove many stems in the first year after planting while the rhubarb gets established.
- Only harvest a few stems at once, and beware overcropping – it will reduce the plant’s vigour.
- Stop harvesting in July to allow the plant to rebuild its energy stores before the autumn.