

Swiss Chard

Beta vulgaris

aka spinach beet, leaf beet



Origin: Mediterranean coast

Varieties we grow: Red, Yellow, Bright Lights

DID YOU KNOW?

Chard is the same species as beetroot, *Beta vulgaris*, but cultivated for its crunchy stems and large leaves rather than the root.

It is also the same species as sugar beet, which is a white beetroot responsible for approx. 20% of the world's sugar production.

The above are cultivated descendants of the sea beet, which grows wild on the coasts of Europe, northern Africa, and southern Asia.



GROWING CHARD



APPEARANCE AND SIZE Chard leaves are large, dark green with prominent veins. The stalks are also thick and large and may vary in colour from white to yellow to pink and more.



GROWING SEASON Sow seeds outdoors in spring/early summer for repeated harvests through summer into autumn. Sow again in mid-summer allowing the chard to overwinter outdoors, giving early harvests the next spring. For small salad leaves, sow small batches and harvest young leaves regularly. Chard is similar to spinach, but it is more hardy during extreme cold or hot weather and gives repeated harvests over many months.



SUNLIGHT Chard enjoys a sunny site with 4-8 hours of sunlight but would benefit from some shade in the summer.



SOIL Prefers well-draining but moisture-retentive soil with an adequate supply of compost and a neutral pH of 6-6.8.



WATERING Although chard can withstand some drought, prevent the soil from drying out by watering it thoroughly at least once a week. Ensure that plants grown in containers get watered more often, as they will dry out faster.



HYDROPONICS In a hydroponic system, chard likes an EC of 1.6 and a pH of 6. A warm environment and 14 hrs of light encourage quick growth.

USING CHARD

COMMON USES

Young chard leaves are a tender and colourful addition to a salad. Larger leaves are cooked like spinach, with a slightly longer cooking time due to their robustness. The crunchy stems are a tasty addition to a stir fry. Chard can be added to stews, curries or baked into pastries. Check our website [HERE](#) for recipes.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Chard is high in vitamins A, K, C as well as potassium, iron, magnesium and dietary fibre. The mineral content may change once it is cooked.

HARVESTING CHARD

Harvest the outer leaves of chard leaving the middle in tact as this is where new growth will come from. Pick leaves that are at least 5 cm tall and don't let them get too big, as they will become tough and leathery. Regular picking encourages more leaves to form so you will be able to harvest chard for months! Aim to harvest around 1/3rd or up to a half of the plant at any time, harvesting more if the plant is bigger.



STORING AND PRESERVING CHARD

DRYING

You can dehydrate leafy greens such as chard, lettuce, spinach and kale to make a green powder. To dry in a dehydrator, place leaves on a sheet in a single layer and dry at 40C for 4-8 hours. To dry in the oven set your oven to the lowest setting, open the door to reduce moisture, and cook for 2-4 hours. Check in periodically and discard any burned leaves. Store in a dry, clean jar out of direct sunlight for up to a year. Add to dishes just before serving, do not cook.

FREEZING

You can freeze the leaves and stems together or separately, note that the stems are more fibrous so take a bit longer to cook. Wash the chard, pat dry and chop it up. You can freeze the chard in chunks, in which case simply place them in the freezer in a suitable container. If you want to freeze the chard as separate parts, lay out on a cookie sheet without any overlapping layers, flash freeze for 1 hr in the freezer and then transfer to a suitable container and store in the freezer. To maintain flavour and colour for longer, blanch the chard before freezing. Blanch the leaves for 30-60 seconds and the stems for 1-2 mins.

STORAGE

Eat baby leaves on the same day they are picked as they will not store well. Store chard in the fridge in a plastic bag to maintain moisture. You can also store it in a jar of water if you see that the leaves are wilting.

COMMON PESTS

APHIDS

IDENTIFY

- More likely found on plants grown indoors.
- Usually signified by green and white small bugs that will be present in large numbers, some will have wings.
- You may spot sticky honeydew on the plant leaves which is secreted by the aphids, or tiny bite marks on the plant stem where the aphids are feeding, which then results in misshapen leaves.



TREAT

- Check your plants regularly as there is a higher chance of controlling aphids if spotted early.
- Remove aphids when spotted by hand or wash off with water.
- You can also thoroughly spray with a mix of water and dish soap (1tsp dish soap to 1L water) to suffocate the aphids. Spray twice a week and wash the produce before eating.

OTHER

- Birds may peck at young seedlings. Cover them with mesh if this is an issue.
- Slugs and snails can decimate chard, especially as seedlings. Deter them by keeping your growing area clear of debris or wood and keeping the grass short to reduce hiding spaces. You can use beer traps to attract and drown the slugs or design your space to attract hedgehogs, which will feed on them.

