

Chard

Beta vulgaris



General Information

- Edible plant
- Sun Exposure: Best in full sun, tolerates partial shade
- Water needs: Moderate
- Temperature: Does best in moderate temperatures during spring and fall. Can still survive in summer heat but grows more slowly. Chard leaves die in frost, so time your planting accordingly
- When to harvest: Harvest 30 days after sowing for young leaves, and 45-60 days after sowing for mature leaves. Trimming off individual leaves for harvest allows the plant to continue to grow leaves as you pick them.
- Harvest season: Late spring to summer to late fall

Planting Guide

- Planting Season: Start planting at cooler temperatures, before or after summer months (Feb-March or Aug-Sept). In the spring it is okay to sow seeds during frost, just make sure by the time the plant starts growing (2-3 weeks after planting) the frost is gone. You can check the last spring frost date online.
- Location: Somewhere with full sun is ideal, but the plant will tolerate partial shade. Make sure soil is well-draining and rich.
- Spacing: 18 inches between each individual plant in a row, and rows spaced at least 3 feet apart from each other.
- Soil and Fertilizer: Mix compost into the soil at the planting area, and if the soil is particularly poor in nutrients apply a layer of balanced fertilizer before planting. After planting, the chard usually does not need fertilizer, but if you notice plants staying small you can add some balanced fertilizer mid-season to boost growth.

Care Guide

- Irrigation: Chard does not need too much water to thrive. Just make sure to water evenly, and maybe water extra during dry spells in the summer. You can allow the first few inches of soil to dry before watering again. Consider adding mulch to preserve moisture. 1-1.5 inches of water per week should be sufficient.
- Pruning: Although chard does not need pruning like woody plants, continually trimming the leaves for harvest encourages the plant to keep producing new leaves, so it is a good idea to continue to harvest for higher yield. Cut off larger, more mature leaves, while leaving younger ones to grow.
- Pests: Common pests like aphids, worms, and even slugs plague the chard plant. These can be sprayed off with water, or combated with insecticidal soap
- Disease: One main disease haunts the chard: cercospora leaf spot. This is a plant pathogen characterized by blotchy lesions on the leaves of the plant. If you notice this disease immediately remove all infected plants and closely monitor the rest for infection. Make sure to plant the chard in a different location the following year. Fungicides are another option for combating the disease, however some strains have been found to be resistant.

Sources:

<https://www.almanac.com/plant/swiss-chard>

<https://harvesttotable.com/harvest-store-swiss-chard/>

<https://cropwatch.unl.edu/plantdisease/sugarbeet/cercospora-leaf-spot>

<https://www.gardeningchannel.com/swiss-chard-easy-to-grow-and-healthy-to-eat/>