

Rhubarb Instructions

1. On arrival plant the bare roots in a pot of compost. Plant the crown with the growing point at, or just below, the soil surface and grow them on for about a month until the roots have filled the pot well.
2. Then plant them out into an open, sunny site with moist, but free-draining soil, as rhubarb hates being waterlogged in winter. Avoid frost pockets as stems are susceptible to frost. Choose an area which has not grown rhubarb in the last six years.
3. Dig in plenty of well rotted organic material.
4. Spread the roots out and plant so the tip of the crown is just below (2.5cm) the surface of the soil.
5. Rhubarb can also be planted in very large pots at least 50cm (20in) deep and wide.
6. Don't harvest anything in the first season. Just mulch your plants (not too close to the crown) and let them grow and establish themselves well. Simply allow the sticks of rhubarb to die back in the first autumn.
7. Spread organic compost around the crown in its dormant winter phase.
8. If a stressed plant should run to seed in late spring, due to dry and cold conditions, remove the flowering spike straight away.
9. In the second season (ie. about 12-14 months after planting,) you can start picking when the leaves have fully unfurled and the stems are approximately 30cm (12in) long. It's important to only harvest a few stems at a time, as over-cropping will reduce the plants vigour. Never take more than half of the stems at a time.
10. Stalks are harvested by gently twisting the stems and pulling from the base of the plant. Remember: the leaves are poisonous to eat but can be safely composted with the rest of your garden waste.
11. Every 5 or 6 years you will need to lift and divide rhubarb crowns to maintain their vigour and ensure that they remain productive. Use a spade to lift each crown before splitting it into 3 or 4 pieces and replanting them separately. Make sure that each piece has a healthy looking bud which will become the growth point for next year's new shoots. This division should be done between November and March while the plant is dormant.