

GROWING GUIDE FOR SWISS CHARD

Binomial Name:	Beta vulgaris
Varieties:	Fordhook Giant, Ruby, Flamingo Pink, Five Colour Silverbeet, Vulcan, Oriole Orange
Start:	Seeds or seedlings
Germination:	5 - 7 days, 5°C to 35°C
Seed Life (viability):	4 years
Soil:	Well drained
Sunlight:	Full sun, part shade
Sow Seeds:	5 - 15 cm apart
Transplant Seedlings:	15 - 30 cm apart
Ave. Days to Harvest:	57 to 64
Good Companions:	Beans, beetroot, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, kohlrabi, potato, radish, rhubarb, strawberry, tomato
Bad Companions:	

Sowing & Planting:

Grown for its tasty and nutritious leaves and leafstalks (petioles), chard is a good substitute for spinach in most recipes. Prefers cool weather, but lasts through summer without going to seed (bolting). Colourful leaves and petioles make it great for edible landscaping and ornamental plantings.

Start planting about 2 to 3 weeks before last expected frost. Sow seeds 1 to 2cm deep, 5 to 15cm apart, in rows 45 to 60cm apart. Like beets, a chard "seed ball" produces more than one plant, and so will require thinning. Thin to 15 to 30cm spacing's.

If you plan to harvest whole plants then make succession plantings throughout the late summer. Delay planting of 'Ruby Red' or 'Rhubarb' chard until after last frost. These varieties may go to seed (bolt) straight away if the seedling is exposed to freezing temperatures. Start seed inside for earlier crops or if you want to arrange different coloured plants of the variety 'Five Colour Silverbeet'.

Growing:

Mulch the plants well to retain moisture and suppress weeds. As the plants age, older leaves can get a bit tough. Cut the plants back to about 10 to 15cm tall to encourage a flush of new, tender growth.

Harvesting:

You can begin harvesting when leaves reach usable size. Remove a leaf or two from each plant, or cut plants an inch or two above the soil for cut-and-come-again harvest. Avoid damaging the growing point in the centre of the plant at harvest.

Chard will be ready for harvest in 55 to 60 days from sowing. Pick outside leaves as early as 10cm long but before leaves grow to 25cm long. Older leaves will have an earthy flavour.

Harvest chard on a cut-and-come-again schedule; remove a few outside leaves at time. If you harvest the whole plant, cut it back to about 8cm above the soil and it will grow back. Chard that over winters can be harvested again the second year.

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