



Columbia Nursery

Growing & Caring for Rhubarb in Northwest Montana

Why Grow Rhubarb?

Rhubarb is a classic garden staple, perfect for pies, jams, and cobblers. With minimal effort, you can grow this hardy perennial and enjoy years of sweet and tart harvests. Once planted, rhubarb is easy to maintain and will keep producing for up to 20 years!

Choosing Your Rhubarb

At Columbia Nursery, we offer healthy potted rhubarb plants each spring.

Recommended Varieties:

Variety	Description
Crimson Cherry	Heavy producer with bright red stalks, tender and sweet
Victoria	Large, leafy green tops with pink-red stalks; tart, apple-gooseberry flavor, no stringiness

Planting Rhubarb

When & Where to Plant:

- Best Time: Spring
- Sunlight: Needs at least 5–6 hours of sun per day
- Spacing: Plants grow large—up to 4 feet wide at maturity

How to Plant:

- Prepare the Hole: Dig 18–24 inches deep and wide; mix in compost for rich soil.
- Improve Drainage: For clay soils, add peat moss and sand; for sandy soils, compost is usually enough.
- Plant the Crown: Set the crown just at soil level; water well, but avoid soggy conditions (especially in cool, wet springs).



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Caring for Rhubarb

Watering:

Keep soil evenly moist, especially during active growth, to develop sweeter stalks.

Feeding:

- Early Spring: Apply 2–4 inches of compost or well-rotted manure before shoots emerge.
- Mid-Harvest: Top dress again to replenish nutrients.
- Fertilizer: Use a high-nitrogen fertilizer (e.g., 10-0-0) if needed.

Flower Stalks:

Remove flower stalks as soon as they appear. These are easily identifiable and should be cut out so the plant focuses energy on edible stalks.

Harvesting Rhubarb

Plant Age	Harvest Guidelines
Years 1–2 (New Plants)	Light harvest only; take a few stalks early
Year 3 and Beyond	Harvest up to half the stalks at a time

- Harvest Season: Spring to mid-July
- Stop harvesting when stalks become thin in midsummer.
- Even if you don't plan to use the stalks, harvest regularly to keep the plant healthy.
- Wash and freeze whole stalks for later use.

Safety Note:

Only the stalks are edible. Leaves and roots are poisonous to humans and animals. Seek immediate medical care if ingested.

Longevity & Pest Resistance

- Rhubarb plants can live 20 years or more.
- Very few pests bother rhubarb, and it is deer resistant.



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Need Help?

Stop by Columbia Nursery for rhubarb plants, soil amendments, and growing advice. We'll help you start your own rhubarb patch for years of delicious harvests!