

Grow Free: A Project to Expand Access to Locally Grown Food

The Giving Garden Project is a three-year project to expand access to locally grown food in Ashland and Bayfield counties. It is open to anyone – households, public places, libraries, churches, town halls and more – who want to plant rhubarb roots and share freely with those who need food. In its first year, free rhubarb roots will be available and each year a new plant will be offered to growers.

Many thanks to our financial supporters and collaborators!



Questions about Grow Free?

Contact the UW-Madison Extension Ashland County Office!

Phone: 715-682-7017

Office Hours: Monday – Friday
8:00AM – 4:00PM

Courthouse Room 107
201 Main Street West
Ashland, WI 54806-1652



For full info on Grow Free, scan the QR code with your phone, or go to ashland.extension.wisc.edu/grow-free



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April 2026

Grow Free: The Giving Garden Project 2026



Thank you for adopting a rhubarb plant through "Grow Free: The Giving Garden Project"! We're happy you're planting a perennial edible plant that you can share with your friends and neighbors!

Simple Planting Instructions:

Please be kind and plant your rhubarb root within 48 hours of pick up!

- Your plant loves at least 6 to 8 hours of daily sunshine! Put it in a sunny place in your yard.
- Make sure there's at least 3 feet of open space all around your potted roots. Your rhubarb will get bigger as it grows, so leave plenty of clear space around it now.
- Choose soil that is high in organic matter and has good drainage. Rhubarb doesn't like soaking wet feet!
- Plant your roots in the biodegradable pot it comes in to make sure its roots aren't damaged during planting. The fabric will naturally decompose and add to the healthy soil around the roots.
- The soil in your pot is composted soil amendments from Big Lake Organics in Ashland. "Nurture" is safe, composted organic materials from local gardens and restaurants. Big Lake Organics: biglakeorganics.com
- Dig a hole only as deep as the top of the pot to make sure the root tip is sticking out of the soil.
- Water daily for the first week to 10 days.
- Over the summer, watch the stalks grow red and tall, but don't eat them yet!

Special Notes

- Never eat the leaves! They are toxic to humans and pets. Even wild animals won't eat them!
- Let this year's stalks grow without picking them. To make sure the plant lives a long time, don't pick them until next spring.
- Your variety of rhubarb is called Victoria!

Resources to Help You Grow Healthy Rhubarb

- **How to choose a planting spot, how to plant your pot, and how to maintain it:** Ashland County Extension's Grow Free website: ashland.extension.wisc.edu/grow-free



- **Post photos of you and your plant's new home:** Use the "Grow Free: The Giving Garden Project-Rhubarb" Facebook page!
- **Questions on planting and maintenance:** Contact the UW Madison Horticulture "Ask a Gardener" free service! A specialist will answer your gardening questions in a day or two! hort.extension.wisc.edu/ask-a-gardening-question
- **Live UW Madison Horticulture Zooms open to the public every month on Wednesdays:** hort.extension.wisc.edu/ask-your-gardening-question-live/
- **New to gardening? Let UW Madison Horticulture help you grow a green thumb:** hort.extension.wisc.edu/new/

Cooking with Rhubarb!

B4166-23
Healthy Seasonal Produce

RHUBARB



Rhubarb is in season from May through June.

Tips for selecting rhubarb

- When selecting rhubarb, choose fresh, crisp stalks.
- Choose stalks that are bright pink and free of disease or insect damage.
- Dark pink stalks that are smaller in diameter are generally younger, sweeter, and more tender than thick, long green stalks, but this depends on the variety.
- One pound of raw rhubarb yields ¾ cup when cooked.

Storage

Trim the leaf away from the rhubarb stalk and discard the leaf. Caution: Rhubarb leaves are poisonous to humans and animals and should not be eaten! Stalks will keep in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 weeks in a sealed plastic bag. Rhubarb can be frozen.

Preparation

Stand the stalks in cold water for an hour to refresh them before cooking. Before use, trim the ends and peel off tough strings; completely peeling rhubarb is unnecessary. Rhubarb can be served as a sauce over ice cream, combined with fresh strawberries, or made into pies, puddings, breads, jams, and refreshing beverages.

Key nutrients

- Fiber to prevent constipation
- Potassium to maintain normal blood pressure

Recipes

Quick rhubarb cobbler

3 cups diced rhubarb
1 package red-colored sweetened gelatin
1 tablespoon butter or margarine
¼ cup packed brown sugar
½ cup rolled oats
Place diced rhubarb in an 8x8-inch pan. Mix with dry gelatin. Prepare topping by combining butter, brown sugar, and oats with a fork and sprinkle on top. Bake at 350°F for 35 minutes until rhubarb is soft and bubbly. Serves 9; 85 Cal; 1.5 g fat.

Baked rhubarb sauce

1½ pounds diced rhubarb
¼ cup water
1 cup sugar
Dash of salt
Put rhubarb in a 1½-quart casserole dish. Add water, sugar, and salt. Cover tightly and bake at 350°F for 20 to 25 minutes or until tender. Chill and serve. Cooked rhubarb is good with fresh strawberries topped with a dab of whipped cream. Serves 8; 115 Cal; less than 1 g fat.

Easy rhubarb spread

5 cups diced rhubarb
1 small can crushed pineapple, drained
2 cups sugar
1 small package strawberry gelatin
Mix together first three ingredients and let stand 2 hours, then boil for 12 minutes. Remove from heat, add dry gelatin, stir, and pour into jars or plastic containers. Refrigerate for up to 2 weeks. Can be frozen. Serves 48; 45 Cal; less than 1 g fat.

GREAT RHUBARB RECIPES

Kid-approved Rhubarb Muffins

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup whole wheat flour
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup light brown sugar
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup milk
¼ cup canola oil
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 ½ cups fresh rhubarb, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 375° and spray 18 muffin cups with cooking spray. In a mixing bowl combine the flours, baking powder, soda, salt, and cinnamon. Set aside. In a separate bowl, beat together the brown sugar, eggs, milk, oil, and lemon juice until well-combined. Add the moist ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until just combined. Fold in the rhubarb. Portion out into muffin cups.

Rhubarb and Strawberry Crumble

FILLING:
4 C rhubarb, cut into 1/2" pieces
2 C strawberries, quartered
½ C sugar
2 T flour
CRUMBLE TOPPING:
½ C rolled oats
½ C flour
½ C brown sugar
1 T butter, softened
1 T canola oil
1 T fruit juice (any flavor)
¼ C chopped nuts

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large bowl, toss together rhubarb, strawberries, sugar, and flour. Place this mixture in a 9" square baking dish. In the same bowl, combine oats, flour, brown sugar, butter, and oil. With a fork or your fingers, combine the ingredients until the mixture is crumbly. Stir in the juice and nuts until evenly moistened. Distribute the topping mixture over the fruit. Bake for 35-40 minutes, or until the fruit is bubbling and the topping is golden.

RHUBARB LEATHER

Ingredients

1 quart rhubarb (or a mix of half strawberry/half rhubarb)
¼ cup water
3 TBS honey (1 1/2 TBS per cup of puree)

Directions

- Wash and cut into small pieces about 1 quart of rhubarb (or strawberry/rhubarb combination).
- Add ¼ cup water and rhubarb to saucepan.
- Cook only until rhubarb starts to soften. Let cool slightly.
- Add to blender and set to puree (yield: 2 cups puree).
- Add 1½ tablespoons of honey per cup of puree.
- Line a cookie sheet, 12 inches by 17 inches, with plastic wrap.
- Spread puree evenly over the plastic about 1/4 to 1/8 inch thick, but do not push it completely to the sides. Leave a bit of plastic showing for easy removal.
- Add to oven set at 140° to 150°F or home dehydrator.
- It will take about 6 to 8 hours to dry, but could take longer, depending on humidity, variations among different ovens and dehydrators, and upon the amount of sugar in the puree. More sugar — longer drying time.

FUN RHUBARB FACTS

- Rhubarb is high in calcium and helps make our bones and teeth strong.
- Rhubarb is the stem part of the plant.
- Rhubarb leaves are toxic so don't eat the leaves!
- Rhubarb tastes delicious!



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Healthy Seasonal Produce: Rhubarb (B4166-23)

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This material was adapted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Iron County. Below is the statement that was shared on the original version of this document. USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact 1-800-221-5689 or visit online at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/>. In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800)795-3572

