

# RHUBARB



Rhubarb is a perennial plant that is a relative of buckwheat. It is by definition a vegetable, but it is most often treated as a fruit. Just like cranberries, rhubarb is almost unbearably tart on its own and needs the sweetness of sugar, honey, or fruit juice added to it to balance out the acidity. Rhubarb is nicknamed the “pie plant” because that is how it is primarily used. Only the stalks as pictured above should be eaten. The leaves of rhubarb should NEVER be eaten cooked or raw. Eating the leaves can be poisonous because they contain oxalate. This toxin, plus another unknown toxin also found in the leaves, has been reported to cause poisoning when large quantities of raw or cooked leaves are ingested.

Rhubarb dates back to ancient China and at that time it was used for medicinal purposes. Its primary function was to induce vomiting. The first record of rhubarb as food was in 1778 in Europe. Rhubarb was brought to the United States in early 1800. There are three types of rhubarb, red stalk types, speckled types, and green stalk types. Nutritionally rhubarb provides vitamin C to the diet.