PLANT FACT SHEET

Rheum rhabarbarum L.

GENUS *Rheum* **FAMILY** Polygonaceae

COMMON NAMES Rhubarb

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: leaves, Vegetable

CAUTION: The leaves contain oxalates and are poisonous.
The leaf stalks are cooked and eaten. They need sweetening. They are used to flavour ice cream, jams, jellies, sauces, cakes, tarts, puddings, and are also stewed.

DESCRIPTION

See Rheum x hybridum. Our common edible rhubarb is developed from this plant by hybridisation. A stemless herb. It is a herb that keeps growing from year to year. It grows 60-80 cm high. The rootstocks are stout and 8-12 cm across. The leaves near the base are in a ring. The leaf stalks are 15-30 cm long and fleshy. The leaves near the base are oval or triangle shaped. They are 10-16 cm long by 8-14 cm wide. They can be larger. They have shallow lobes. The edges are wavy. The flowering stems are 1-1.5 m high.

HABITAT

It requires cool temperate conditions. It is native to northern China and Siberia. In Hobart Botanical gardens.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown by division of the rootstock. The flower stems are removed to give a better yield of leaf stalks next season.

NOTES

There are about 50 Rheum species. This is a wild species.

PICTURES

Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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