Chinese Rhubarb

Rheum officinale



Chinese Rhubarb
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Plant Height: 30 inches

Flower Height: 6 feet

Spread: 5 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 4

Other Names: Tibetan Rhubarb, Turkey Rhubarb

Description:

Primarily cultivated for herbal medicinal use of the roots and stems; leaves are highly poisonous and should not be consumed; plumes of white flowers tower above the plants in summer, foliage turns red in fall

Edible Qualities

Chinese Rhubarb is a perennial herb that is commonly grown for its edible qualities, although it does have ornamental merits as well. It produces coppery-bronze roots which are harvested from early to mid summer. The roots have a bitter taste.

The roots are most often used in the following ways:

- Eating When Cooked/Prepared

Features & Attributes

Chinese Rhubarb features airy spikes of creamy white flowers held atop the stems from early to mid summer. Its attractive large crinkled lobed leaves are dark green in color. As an added bonus, the foliage turns a gorgeous red in the fall.

This is an herbaceous perennial herb with a rigidly upright and towering form. Its wonderfully bold, coarse texture can be very effective in a balanced garden composition. This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and should be cut back in late fall in preparation for winter. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Aside from its primary use as an edible, Chinese Rhubarb is sutiable for the following landscape applications;

- Vertical Accent
- General Garden Use
- Herb Gardens
- Bog Gardens

Planting & Growing

Chinese Rhubarb will grow to be about 30 inches tall at maturity extending to 6 feet tall with the flowers, with a spread of 5 feet. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant can be integrated into a landscape or flower garden by creative gardeners, but is usually grown in a designated herb garden. It does best in full sun to partial shade. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.