



# Rhubarb Production

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# Rhubarb

- Buckwheat family
- Vegetable grown as a fruit
- Cool season perennial
- Native of Central Asia
- Grown 5,000 years ago as a medicinal crop
- Petiole (stem) used for food
- Prefers summer mean temperature of 75 degrees



# Rhubarb

- Requires fertile well-drained soil
- Soil high in organic matter
- Plastic mulch can increase earliness by 10-14 days
- 6.0 - 6.8 ph



# Rhubarb

- Good quality nursery stock
  - Free from virus, crown rot, and root rot
- Plant in very early spring
- Space 3-4 feet apart in row
- Row spacing dependant on equipment – typically 8 feet
  - $8 \times 4 = 1,200$  plants per acre
- Plant so bud is 1 inch from surface of the soil



# Rhubarb

- Requires 3 inches of water every 7-10 days
- Water in late September for better winter survival and early spring growth



# Rhubarb

- Crimson Red Cherry
  - Not recommended because of seed stocks
- Valentine
  - Free of seed stocks, bright red, lacking in vigor
- Canada Red
  - Good vigor with moderate red stocks
- Cherry Red
  - Plant lacks vigor when harvested twice/season



# Rhubarb

- It has been generally observed that the redder the stocks the less vigorous the plant



# Rhubarb

Most to least color rating

Juice

Valentine	76.6
Cherry Red	79.4
Canada Red	79.7
Strawberry	81.2



# Rhubarb

- Responds well to fertilizer
  - 70-80 lbs. nitrogen per year for the first year
  - 140-180 lbs. of nitrogen each year after
  - 70-80 lbs. of phosphate each year
  - Requires high level of potash
- Manure valuable for organic matter
  - 15 ton per acre
- One cup of 10-10-10 per plant per year
- Soil test each year



# Rhubarb

- Do not harvest first year
- Harvest lightly second year
- Plants must re-grow after harvest for long term survival
- Cut rather than pull
- Harvest in the early morning
- One or two harvests per season



# Rhubarb

- Potential profit
- Canada data
  - \$850 per year after 3 years
  - \$1,500 after 5 years
- Minnesota data
  - 10 pounds per plant/cutting



# Rhubarb

- Production

- 3-7 ton per acre
- 5-7 ton per acre
- 1,200 plants/acre @10 pounds/plant = 6 ton
- Most growers have 1-2 acres



# Rhubarb

- Herbicide selection limited
- Control perennial weeds prior to planting
- Cultivate shallow



# Rhubarb

- Rhubarb tolerates very cold weather
- Mulch 2-3 inches to prevent drying



# Rhubarb

- Labor costs (from Canada study)
- Planting/acre
  - 30 hours
- Hand weeding/acre
  - 5 hours
- Harvesting
  - .10 cents a pound



# Rhubarb

- Remove flower stocks



# Rhubarb

- Notes from Minnesota growers
  - 10 lbs. per cutting per plant
  - 4 feet apart in the row- row width depends on equipment size
  - Plant costs -- \$1.50/plant (set)
  - Canada Red
    - More smaller stems so labor costs are more
  - Valentine
    - 3-4 year life span




# Rhubarb

- Insect problems
  - Tarnished plant bug
  - Potato stem borer
  - Rhubarb curculio
  - Potato leaf hopper
  - Armyworms
  - Slugs





# Rhubarb

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- Diseases
    - Leaf spot
    - Root and crown rot
  - Well drained site

# Rhubarb

- Agricultural Utilization Research Institute
  - (AURI)
  - Crookston Minn.
- Todd Sisson lab manager
  - 218-281-7600
  - Will process and freeze
  - 1,000-1,200 pounds per day



# Rhubarb

- Youth Project Loans
- 10-20 years old involved in 4-H, FFA or similar organizations
- \$5,000 maximum
- 3.5% interest



# Rhubarb

- Planning
- Knowledge
- Markets
- Production
- Time
- Costs
- Risk





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