

## Rhubarb

Ready for Picking!

By Nancy Ann

“Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb.” I’ve read that that is what background actors in a play are supposed to mumble to make it look like they are talking among themselves.

Well, here in Minnesota, that’s what a lot of gardeners are picking. I just made a rhubarb custard pie; it lasted almost two full days! I’ll likely make another today. There are many recipes for this perennial vegetable (which is often mistaken for a fruit due to its tangy flavor). Now is the time to harvest, and you can keep harvesting until about mid-June. Never harvest more than two thirds of your plant. If you see the seed head developing, take a sharp knife and cut it off at an angle near the ground. Be careful not to cut into the roots.

When I harvest my rhubarb, I just pull the stalk from the plant, rather than cut it with a knife. If the stalk is ready, it will pull out with relative ease. I then cut the leaves (which are poisonous and inedible) from the stalk and throw them into my compost. They are safe to put into your compost.

Rhubarb is easy to freeze, so if you don’t have time to make something with it immediately, then freeze it for future use. I freeze rhubarb every year. Part of what I freeze will be used once my strawberries are ready and I’ll make strawberry/rhubarb jam. I’ve also been known to make “Rhu-berry” wine. This year I plan to also dehydrate a lot of it and experiment with new recipes.

If you have rhubarb in your yard, don’t let it go to waste!