

Rheum - Growing Guide

Growing Rheum Palmatum

Chinese Rhubarb

This is a true bog plant whose flowering spikes can achieve 8ft in height eventually if grown in a suitably damp spot in moist humus rich compost beside a stream or pond. It will do best in full sun although dappled shade suits it perfectly well.

Rheum palmatum has enormous fleshy rhizomes and seldom grows well in a pot. It has huge fleshy rhubarb-like leaves on thick leaf stalks. The leaves are ovate to rounded and have three to nine coarsely toothed palmate dark green leaves. The leaves have reddish hairy undersides. The flowering spikes appear in June. In maturity they can extend up to 6ft from the centre of the plant (8ft overall). The flowers are normally deep red (but can be creamy green) and are borne in long panicles branching from the main stem with smaller leaflets appearing from the branch nodes.

This is a fully hardy plant which can be propagated by lifting and separating or splitting the dormant clump of rhizomes. It is also a very greedy one which responds well to a heavy mulching over and around the top of its rhizomes. Seed can be collected in plentiful quantities in the autumn and sown in containers straight away in the autumn for early spring germination.

This plant grows well in many bog planting combinations alongside astilbe, aruncus, rodgersia or gunnera; to mention but a few. It will take two or three years to get established and needs a bit of room to spread into. Slug damage is likely as the leaves emerge in the spring in wet conditions but as the plant develops there is seldom any appreciable or noticeable damage. Otherwise it is a sure fire winner and easy to grow.



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