

The Sandy Post

Home & Garden

Rhubarb stalks delicious, but leaves are not

Rhubarb gardeners who are anxiously awaiting harvest day should exercise caution.

While rhubarb stalks are quite tasty, the leaves of the rhubarb plant are not. They contain a high amount of acid and its soluble salts, which make the leaves unfit for human consumption under any circumstances. When harvesting rhubarb, discard the leaves.

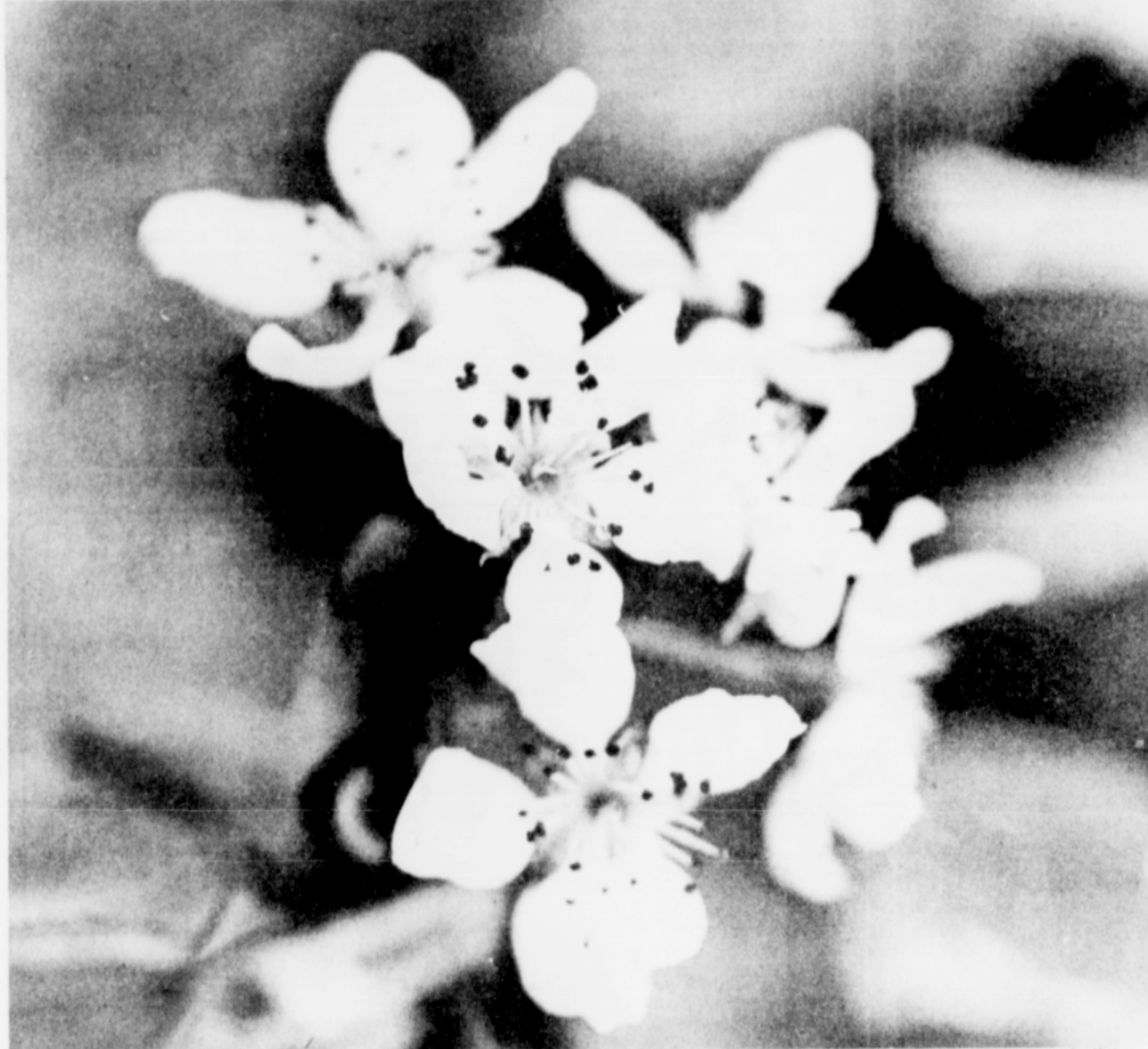
Rhubarb is ready for harvest as soon as the stalks are of sufficient size.

To pick the stalks, grasp them at the base of the plant and pull gently from the root crown with a twisting movement. No more than one-third of the plant should be picked during harvesting.

For best results in growing rhubarb, fertilize the plants early in the summer to keep the crowns vigorous. A 10-10-10 or 16-16-16 fertilizer formulation is recommended.

Late in the summer, give the plants a deep watering several times.

If the plants go to seed early in the year, pull or cut out the seed stalks as soon as they appear.



A recent burst of sunshine brought out a fresh batch of pear blossoms to local trees, but forecasters were predicting more rain by the end of the week.

Staff photo

When planning a lawn

Sodding usually easier than seeding

Establishing a lawn by using sod is a simple way to avoid a six to eight week struggle of coaxing a newly seeded lawn into existence.

Growing a lawn by seed is usually extremely difficult, but sodding offers a good chance of success.

If lawn sod is used, it is important to install it correctly, however. Proper site preparation and the choice of a turf grass variety adaptable to local conditions is important.

A blend of selected fine fescues and improved Kentucky bluegrass is found in most of the sods commercially available in Oregon. Some blends also include perennial ryegrass.

The area where the sod is to be planted should be rototilled, graded, fertilized, rolled and raked. The yard should be sloped so water will drain away from the house.

Sod won't thrive if placed directly on subsoil or worn-out topsoil. If additional topsoil is needed, the grading should be done first, then the topsoil should be added and rototilled lightly into the top inch or two of the planting site.

The best way to determine fertilizer and lime requirements is to have a soil analysis done. If you don't have the time for it, use a fertilizer that will supply two pounds of actual element

each of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium for each thousand square feet.

A minimum of 100 pounds of lime per thousand square feet should be added to soils that are extremely acidic or heavy in clay.

Remove all trash, rocks and other debris from the soil surface before laying the sod. Do a final light raking and pack the soil surface lightly with a roller before the sod is delivered.

For best results, install the sod immediately after it is delivered. Sod doesn't keep well in a stack. When ordering sod, arrange to have it delivered when the soil is completely prepared for planting.

Sod can be installed by do-it-yourselfers, but it is usually installed by the supplier, who contracts to both furnish and lay down the sod.

When laying the sod, it is best to establish a straight line through the length of the area and lay the sod along it. Before installing the sod, irrigate the soil lightly. Dry soil beneath the sod will pull moisture from the new grass and increase the risk of damage.

Fit the pieces of sod together as tightly as possible. Don't stretch or overlap the pieces. Butt all ends tightly against each other to prevent air spaces that will cause the roots to dry out.

Make sure the sod is in firm contact with the soil by rolling it after installation. After rolling the sod, add a top dressing of nitrogen fertilizer at a rate of one pound per thousand square feet, then water.

The sod should be watered enough to moisten it and the soil below to a depth of several inches. Keep the sod moist until it has become established.

Shrubs need fertilization

Most home lawns and shrubs respond to spring with a flush of green growth. Those that don't are usually in need of some spring fertilization.

A shot of fertilizer can do wonders for washed-out looking shrubs or lawngrass that has taken of a yellowish cast.

Many fertilizer formulations manufactured specifically for grass are available. Weed and feed combinations will do double duty by killing early summer weeds. Directions for using these fertilizers are on the package.

Ammonium nitrate and ammonium sulfate are alternatives to special lawn fertilizers. If either of these nitrogen sources are used, apply one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

Ammonium nitrate contains 33 percent nitrogen; a

five-pound box will cover 1,000 square feet. Ammonium sulfate contains 21 percent nitrogen.

Washed out evergreen shrubs can also use some fertilizer to green them up again. A fertilizer high in nitrogen, such as a 12-4-8 combination, can put the green back in evergreen.

shrubs and help eliminate stunted growth. It can be applied at the rate of one pound, or two cups, per 100 square feet.

Another cause of pale, washed-out looking evergreen shrubs is lack of magnesium, necessary for chlorophyll building.

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