


**All Gardens  
Great & Small**  
by  
York Co.  
Horticultural Agent  
**Tom Becker**



**Rhubarb For Home Gardens**  
What's another name for a "pie plant"? Ready for picking just ahead of strawberries, rhubarb has gained a place with home bakers for use in tart and juice rhubarb pie.  
Popular for cooks on the farm as well as gourmet kitchens, one cup of rhubarb contains relatively few calories: 20.  
Popular for its bittersweet taste by English farmers in the 19th century stalks have been improved over the years in color, tenderness, juiciness, and flavor.  
Harvesting rhubarb is easy. Harvest the leaf stalks for a short period during its second year and full harvest period (8-10 weeks) during the third growing season and there after. Pull the stalk upward and to the side rather than cutting with a knife.

Look for rhubarb fresh (in season), canned or frozen. Clean the reddish stalks by washing under cold water.  
Rhubarb plants are fairly pest resistant and tolerant of high soil acidity. Watch for flower stalk to develop each season. Remove the flower stalk by cutting as soon as it appears.  
Rhubarb is grown by planting pieces or buds of rhubarb crowns or cuttings. Rhubarb has a large storage root. If you have a friend who has had a rhubarb patch for several years you may be able to convince them that the rhubarb crown needs dividing.  
Commercially, crowns are divided after new plants have grown for about four years. If numerous small stalks indicate that the crowns are becoming

crowded, its time to divide. Saving your own seed is not recommended. Rhubarb seedlings are not "true to type" of parent plants.  
As spring progresses watch for new buds to emerge, and divide them before they grow beyond 6 to 8 inches. At this stage cut down through the crown between the buds, so that a large piece of the storage root will be attached to each bud. Crown pieces may be stored in a cool, dark basement for a week or two before planting.  
Plant crown pieces in early spring in soil enriched with humus or compost and a generous heap of well-rotted cow manure (or dehydrated type for a small patch). Pieces are usually transplanted three feet apart in rows four to five feet apart. Cover pieces with two to three inches of soil. Since rhubarb grows for more than one season, plant at the edge of the garden or along a fence. Do not harvest at all the first season. Remove any seed stalks that form.  
Place plants in a garden spot that will not be disturbed. The average family only needs one or two plants. By forcing, you can grow rhubarb indoors during the winter. In late fall, dig up a few plants and place them in a protected place where they will

freeze, but not dry out. Roots left outdoors to freeze should be covered lightly with soil. After freezing for several weeks, place the roots in a container and cover the crowns with 2-3 inches of soil or sand. The plants

should be grown in darkness or semidarkness for best color and quality. The ideal temperature range is 50°-65° F.  
Any questions concerning this article can be directed to Tom Becker at 840-7408.

## Cook's Question

(Continued from Page B8)

**ANSWER** — A reader would like a recipe for raisin sauce to pour over ham. Thanks to an anonymous reader for sending two recipes.

### Raisin Sauce

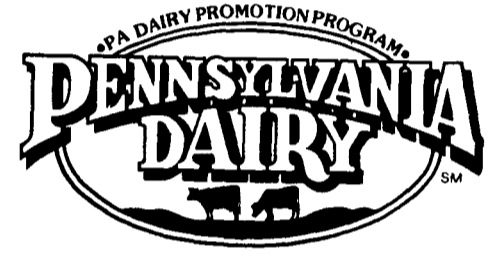
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 cups water

Cook raisins for 5 minutes in the 2 cups water. In another saucepan, combine brown sugar and cornstarch. Add raisin mixture to dry ingredients. Bring to a boil; reduce heat, stir constantly until mixture thickens.

### Raisin Cranberry Sauce

- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons corn starch
- 1½ cups cranberry juice
- ½ cup orange juice
- ½ cup raisins

In a saucepan, mix sugar and cornstarch smoothly with cranberry juice. Add orange juice and raisins. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly until mixture thickens.



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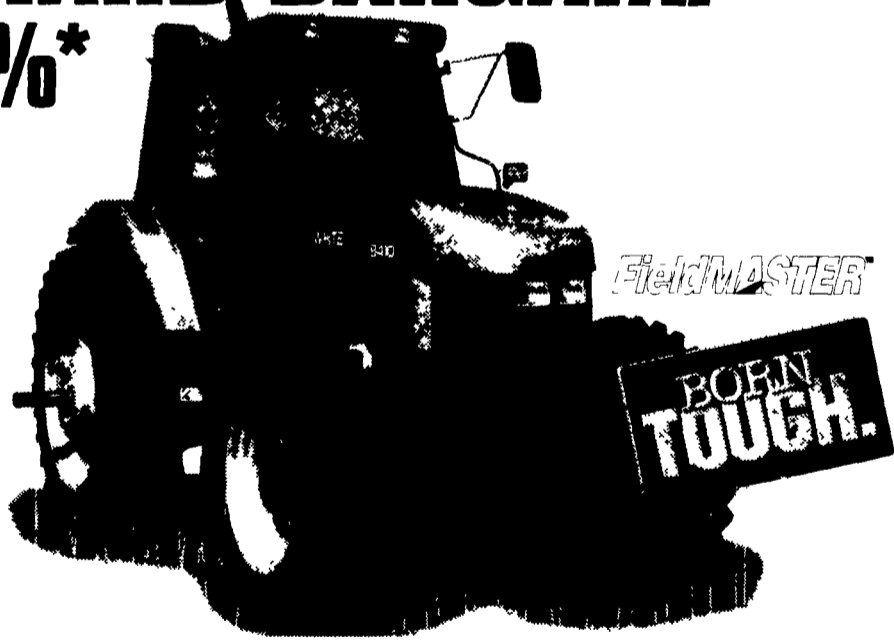
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