

*Beta vulgaris* var. *cicla*

[Synonyms : *Beta hortensis*, *Beta vulgaris* var. *vulgaris*]

**SWISS CHARD** is a perennial (cultivated widely as an annual). Native to the Mediterranean it has fleshy shiny green leaves with pronounced broad white midribs.

It is also known as *Acelga* (Spanish), Beet tops, *Bette* (French), *Blattmangold* (German), *Blette* (French), *Carde* (French), Chard, Foliage beet, *Gwun dat tsoi* (Chinese), *Hou pi cai* (Chinese), *Jun da cai* (Chinese), *Krautstiel* (German), Leaf beet, *Mangold* (German, Swedish), *Rippenmangold* (German), Sea-kale beet, Spinach beet, Sweet chard, White beet, *Ye tian cai* (Chinese), and *Ye yong tian cai* (Chinese).

Warning – the plant can be poisonous (and ultimately cause death) if consumed by humans or animals frequently in large amounts.

*Vulgaris* means ‘common’. *Cicla* is derived from a reference to Sicily (one of the places where the plant was first known to have grown), *Sicula*.

The plant has long been familiar to Arabs, and natural historians note that it can be traced back to the Mesopotamians and the hanging gardens of Babylon. It was familiar to both the ancient Greeks and the Romans who at that time only ate the leaves. Authorities believe that it was not until the advent of the Christian era that the Romans began to develop swiss chard for its root as well. Known records appear to mention Swiss chard first in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. (Authorities have noted that unlike other nationalities the French tend to eat the stalks and the leaves as separate entities.)