

Chive

Allium schoenoprasum is a member of the Amaryllidaceae (amaryllis) family.

Chives are perennials easily distinguished by their growth in dense clumps, lack of well-formed bulbs, and ornamental-quality violet flowers. The tubular leaves are 6 to 10 inches long. No other onion has such a wide geographical distribution as the chive, and few species are more variable.

Other names: *Siu heung, tsung* (Chinese); *he* (Vietnamese).

Market Information

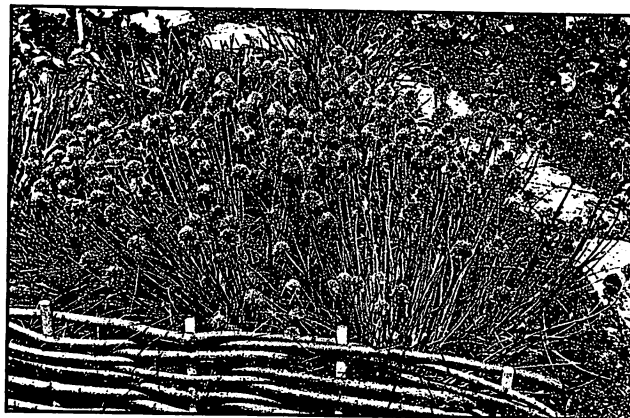
Current production and yield. Most chives are grown in Europe and North America. The California County Agricultural Commissioners have reported that chives were grown commercially in Alameda, Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. Chives are also grown in pots and gardens throughout the state.

Use. The slender, tubular, hollow green leaves are cut as needed for garnish and seasoning in salads, soups, and stews. Chives are also used as ornamentals, either in the garden or in household pots, because of the attractive rose to violet flowers that appear atop the uniform green clumps of leaves. Dried chives are increasing in popularity, and this is the intended market for most commercial fields. The flower stems are not palatable.

Culture

Climatic requirements. Chives are hardy in cold weather, withstand drought, and grow well in a wide variety of soils. They prefer moist, cool conditions.

Propagation and care. Readily raised from seeds, chives can also be propagated easily by dividing



The small hollow green leaves of chives are used for garnish and flavoring. The round purple flowers visible here and their stems are unpalatable.
(Photo: Yvonne Savio)

the small rhizomes. The chive is a hardy plant, and requires little care. Plant the seed $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep every 2 to 4 inches in rows 8 inches apart. Thin the plants to one clump every 6 inches in row. Harvest with scissors or a sharp knife, cutting the leaves back to within 2 inches of the soil.

Planting, whether by seeding or by dividing, usually occurs in the spring or summer. The number of plants within a clump will double 5 or 10 times each year, given sufficient space, water, light, and nutrients. The plants grow most rapidly in spring and summer. Natural dormancy begins in the fall, and regrowth starts during the winter. Frequent watering and nitrogen applications are recommended for the spring and summer.

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Sources

Seed

W. Atlee Burpee & Co., 300 Park Avenue, Warminster, PA 18974

The Cook's Garden, P.O. Box 65, Londonderry, VT 05148

Johnny's Selected Seeds, 299 Foss Hill Road, Albion, ME 04910

Le Jardin du Gourmet, P.O. Box 75, St. Johnsbury Center, VT 05863

Nichols Garden Nursery, 1190 North Pacific Highway, Albany, OR 97321

Park Seed Co., Cokesbury Road, Greenwood, SC 29647-0001

Seeds Blüm, Idaho City Stage, Boise, ID 83706

Shepherd's Garden Seeds, Shipping Office, 30 Irene Street, Torrington, CT 06790

Taylor's Herb Gardens, 1525 Lone Oak Road, Vista, CA 92084

Tsang and Ma, P.O. Box 5644, Redwood City, CA 94063

More information

Brewster, James, and Haim Rabinowitch. 1989. *Onions and allied crops*. CRC Press, Inc. Boca Raton, FL.

California Agricultural Statistics Service. 1987, 1988. *County Agricultural Commissioner data: 1987 and 1988 annual reports*. California Department of Food and Agriculture, Sacramento, CA.

Jones, Henry, and Louis Mann. 1963. *Onions and their allies*. Interscience Publishers Inc., New York, NY.

Stephens, James. *Minor vegetables*. 1988. Cooperative Extension Bulletin SP-40, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

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