

Japanese Bunching Onion, Welsh Onion, Multiplier Onion

Allium fistulosum is a member of the Amaryllidaceae (amaryllis) family. In China, it is called Cong; in Japan, Negi.

Varieties of Japanese bunching onion include White Spear, Evergreen, Kujo (Kujyo) Multistalk, Ishikura Long, He-shi-ko, Nebuka, Kincho, Red Beard, Tsukuba (a heat-resistant variety grown in spring for summer use), Multi-Stalk, and Tokyo Long White. In Japan, thick-bladed types are also grown. Among the popular varieties are Kaga, Shimonita, Senju, and Kuronobori. Hybrids with the common onion (*A. cepa*) include White Knight and Beltsville Bunching.

The Japanese bunching onion is a garden variety of perennial green onion that produces tillers from its stem. Although a perennial, it is typically grown as an annual. This onion does not form a bulb. It grows in clumps with several tillers bunched together. The stalks are silvery white and about ¼ inch in diameter. Depending on the variety, they will grow 6 to 24 inches long.

This is one of the few *Allium* species that can cross-pollinate with the common onion. As a result, many of the commonly grown green bunching onions are *Allium cepa* × *A. fistulosum* crosses. The non-bulbing and disease-resistant characteristics of *A. fistulosum* are combined with the great vigor and small leaf blades of *A. cepa*.

Other names. *Ndoh trah* (Hmong); *nebuka* (Japanese); *chung* (Chinese); *sibuyas* (Filipino); *hanh-ta* (Vietnamese).

Market Information

Giant Japanese bunching onions have a limited market but get a good price. Some markets would like to see more of the small varieties of bunching onions, such as purple varieties. Mexico has some economic advantage with this labor-intensive crop, so one way to compete is to grow a variety consumers prefer, such as the smaller varieties.

Use. The hollow tube-like leaves are used. The leaf blades and bases can also be used much like those of a common green bunching onion. Growers sometimes blanch the leaves by mounding soil around the lower leaf base to heights of 10 or more inches.



Japanese bunching onion grows 6 to 24 inches tall. (Photo: Hunter Johnson)

Culture

Climatic requirements. The Japanese bunching onion is generally a cool-season vegetable, but varieties have been adapted to a wide range of climates. Most varieties common to the United States are winter-hardy under most California conditions.

Propagation and care. Propagation is generally by seed, but the plants can be grown as overwintering perennials. Plant the seed ½ inch deep. Planting should be in the fall for spring harvest, early spring for summer harvest, or late spring for late summer harvest. Bolting can be a problem if you plant in the fall or winter. Japanese bunching onion needs well-drained soil.

You can thin the plants to a spacing of 3 to 4 inches since they will form bunches from a single seed, or you can plant them thick (½ to 1 inch apart) and transplant them when they reach 6 inches' height. The growing season lasts about 4 months (longer if planted in fall or winter).

Like other *Allium* species, Japanese bunching onion has a sparse, shallow root system. We recommend a complete fertilizer at planting time, fol-

lowed later on by two or three additional nitrogenous fertilizer applications. Frequent, light irrigations are best. The plant competes poorly against

weeds, so site selection and weed control practices are important.

Sources

Seed

American Takii Inc., 301 Natividad Road, Salinas, CA 93906

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

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

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

Sakata Seeds, 18695 Serene Drive, Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Seeds Blüm, Idaho City Stage, Boise, ID 83706

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

Sunrise Enterprises, P.O. Box 10058, Elmwood, CT 06110-0058

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.

Harrington, Geri. 1984. *Grow your own Chinese vegetables*. Garden Way Publishing, Pownal, VT.

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

Mansour, N. S. 1990. *Green bunching onions*. Vegetable Crops Recommendations. Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR.

Rubatzky, Vincent, and Mas Yamaguchi. 1997. *World vegetables, 2d ed.* Chapman and Hall, New York, NY.

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