

CHIVES

Allium.schoenoprasum (Onion)
Allium.tuberosum (Garlic or Chinese)

A beautiful clump of chives was my very first attempt at growing herbs. Perhaps it is because chives are so easy to grow, so useful and so attractive that I became hooked on chives and ultimately herbs! Whether you eat them, use them as a border plant or grow them to help repel Japanese beetles, chives are a must in every garden.



Onion Chives

Description: Onion chives have rounded stems and pink to lavender colored flowers. Garlic chives have broader, flat leaves and white flowers

Plant Type: Hardy Perennial

Grow Zone: 3-9 for onion chives, 4-8 for garlic chives

Height: onion 12", garlic 24"

Spacing: plant 12" apart

Soil: fairly rich, well drained

Propagation: Both onion and garlic chives can easily be sown from seed, indoors or out. If started indoors, transplant outdoors once the chives no longer look like delicate grass. Plants are easily propagated by root division. Chives are one of the easiest herbs to grow.

Planting Location: Full sun but tolerant of partial shade. When seeds are sown outdoors, be sure to keep area free of weeds, chives cannot compete against weeds until established.

Maintenance: Divide plants at least every three years. Do not let the clump get too large or the middle section will die out. Divide plants in early spring, just as new shoots are sprouting. Using a sharp shovel split the plant clump in half. Dig out one of the divided clumps and replant in another location. Make sure to fill in the soil around the parent clump.

Chives need to be kept moist. Garlic chives tend to drop seeds and spread aggressively if not watched closely. Fertilize lightly if leaves appear yellow and fertilize newly established plants 3 times per season. In fall transfer chives into a container and bring indoors and place in a sunny window.

Harvesting: Shear off stems flush to ground and the chives will re-grow with no yellow tips. The more you cut them, the more they will grow.

Preserving: Chive flowers and stems can be preserved in white wine vinegar. Chives can also be frozen.

History/Mythology: Chives were recorded 4,000 years ago in China. They were greatly appreciated by the traveler Marco Polo, who reported their culinary virtues to the West where their popularity quickly spread. The Chinese called them "the jewel among vegetables". In the Middle Ages people believed chives could drive away diseases and evil influences and so they hung bunches of chives in their homes.

Culinary: Both the stems and the flowers can be eaten. Chives are a welcome addition in salads, soups, butter, or soft cheeses. Do not overcook chives; it is best to add them to a dish just prior to finishing cooking or as a garnish. Garlic chives taste stronger than onion.

Companion plant: Apple trees, tomatoes, roses, grapes and carrots. Chives will not do well next to peas or beans.