

CHIVES

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December 1993 LEAFLET NO. 124

Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum* L.) belong to the same family as onions, leeks, and garlic. Although they are native to Asia and Eastern Europe, by the sixteenth century chives were common plants in herb gardens throughout Europe. Chives are hardy perennials, eight to twenty inches tall, that grow in clumps from underground bulbs. The leaves are round and hollow, similar to onions, but smaller in diameter. In June or July, chives produce large round flower heads consisting of purple to pink flowers.

REQUIREMENTS

Chives grow best in full sun in a fairly rich, moist soil, which is high in organic matter, and has a pH of 6 to 8. Chives will, however, tolerate partial shade and most soil types. Chives should be fertilized several times during the growing season with a balanced commercial fertilizer or bone meal and manure. Although specific recommendations are not available for chives, a general recommendation is to incorporate 50 to 75 pounds each of nitrogen, phosphate, and potash per acre at planting. Sidedress with an additional 10 to 15 pounds of nitrogen two times during the growing season. Chives should be kept well watered and weeded.

PLANTING AND CULTURE

Chive seed germinate easily, but slowly. Sow seed about 0.5 inch deep in flats containing a peat-based soilless mix. Maintain constant moisture and a soil temperature of 60 to 70°F. In four to six weeks, the young plants can be planted outdoors,

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preferably after all danger of frost is past. Chives can also be direct seeded outside when the soil is warm, but then few if any leaves should be harvested that first year. Chives may be propagated by simply dividing large clumps into smaller clumps of about 5 bulbs each at any time during the growing season. All plantings should be divided every two to three years to prevent overcrowding. Space plants 4 to 15 inches apart in rows 20 or more inches apart, depending on the width of the cultivator that will be used. Chives are bothered by few disease or insect pests.

#### HARVESTING

Leaves can be harvested after established plants are 6 inches tall. To harvest, simply cut the leaves 2 inches above the ground. Usually, in home gardens or small herb operations, all the leaves of a clump of plants are not cut off at one time. This allows that same clump of plants to be cut over and over again throughout the growing season. In larger operations where this approach is unpractical, the entire clump of plants is cut 2 inches above the ground, but then it takes several weeks before that clump can be recut again. The new growth, however, will be very tender. All plants should be cut regularly to encourage new bulblets to develop, to prevent leaves from becoming tough, and to prevent flower formation.

#### POST-HARVEST HANDLING

Freshly harvested leaves may be trimmed and sold in bunches tied with a rubber band; in small plastic, resealable bags; or in hard-plastic "clamshell" containers. Whole plants sold in 2 to 3 inch pots are also popular with consumers.

## USES

Chives are usually used fresh and are a common addition to baked potatoes, cream soups, and egg dishes. Chives are most successfully dried with a freeze drier. They can be dried with a forced air drier but they tend to discolor and to quickly reabsorb moisture. Chives can also be frozen.

### REFERENCES:

1. Duke, J.A. 1985. Culinary Herbs. A Potpourri. Tradomedic Books, New York.
2. Foster, Steven. 1984. Herbal Bounty. Peregrine Smith Books, Layton, Utah.
3. Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs. 1987. C. Lowalchik and W.H. Hylton, Editors. Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania.
4. Splittstoesser, W.E. 1984. Vegetable Growing Handbook. Second Edition. Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., New York.

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[illegible]

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CH> When you harvest the chives, cut the older outer spikes/leaves/whatever
CH> first, to w/in about 1/4" of the base of the plant, but really no
CH> shorter than that, as it's a little hard on the plant. I've found
CH> that my impromptu "freeze drying" of chives seems to help them retain
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CH> a lot more color. Make sure that the chives are dry. Then just snip  
CH> the stalks into small sections. Spread them on a cookie sheet and put  
CH> it, uncovered, in the freezer. Won't take long for the chives to freeze  
CH> dry that way! I usually just bottle them up afterwards in a small  
CH> freezer proof container & leave them there in the freezer. They last  
CH> a long time that way.

Exported to text file and saved....Thanks!

How closely can chives be planted, realistically? Have a circular  
large pot that \*might\* hold a full season's supply for us, if they can be  
seeded close together.... ;)

CH> ... Think spring!

Spring Equinox has arrived. 'bout time for the real thing now!  
Went to a local park yesterday, and they still had 8" of snow on the ground  
under the trees! Leaf buds popping out all over, but you had to look close  
to see them.

--- Maximus 2.01wb

\* Origin: The Den Of Procrastination 703-709-0138 (1:109/361)

CHIVES =====

CULTIVATION: ===== Chive is a perennial with small bulbs, producing  
grass-like cylindrical hollow dark green leaves. Bearing in the summer an  
inflorescence of pink or purple flowers. Prefers sunny, or partial shady  
location. Grow best in rich, moist and well drained soil.

Take offsets or divide bulb in autumn or spring. Sow seeds in spring.  
Germination time is about 10 days, plant matures in 80 days. They don't

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develop into husky specimens until the second year. Grows in zone 1-10. Remove flowers for better flavor, and divide and replant every 3-4 years. Transplant to 9 inches apart, and water in dry spells.

Cut leaves, leaving 2 inches for regrows. Pick flowers as they open. Once the flowers appear the leaves become much less flavorful. Refrigerate chive leaves in a sealed plastic bag to retain crispness for 7 days. Dry flowers and bulbs. Leaves cannot be dried with any success, but may be quick frozen and stored.

CULINARY USES: ===== Fresh chopped chives will make any food a delight. Sprinkle them on salads, potatoes, cooked vegetables, soups and chicken. Chive do wonders for egg dishes, as well as cottage, pot and other fre white cheeses. It also perks up sour cream and yogurt.

A mild member of the onion family, chives lent just the right accent anytime raw onions might be overpowering. Always add at the end of cooking.

Sprinkle on food to stimulate the appetite and help digestion. They will also help counteract the fattiness of some foods. To reconstitute dried chives, moist with salad dressing or lemon juice. Chives freezes well but are poor when dried.

Use the bulb sparingly. You can rub it around a salad bowl or fondue dish to add flavor.

Use chives in place of raw onion in hamburgers for a milder flavor.

MEDICAL USES: ===== Chives are said to stimulate the appetite and relieve high blood pressure . A few crushed chive bulbs added to boiling water, then allowed to cool, can help ease a troublesome cough if the drink is sipped regularly.

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Chives are high in vitamin C and iron. The iron content is useful against anemia. In order to receive the maximum benefit, chives must be eaten fresh.

The sulfur compounds in chives have antibiotic properties. Eating chives seems to lower blood levels of low-density lipoproteins, the bad cholesterol that clings to artery walls. This effect is attribute to the oils in each plant.

WARNING: ===== Generally regarded as safe, for healthy nonpregnant, nonnursing adults.

OTHER USES: ===== Many insects are repelled by the odor of chives, which appear to act as safe natural pest repellents. They keep the bugs away without poisoning people or pets. Grow chives as a deterrent for aphids, apple scab and mildew.