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 rhizomes. The chive is a hardy plant, and requires little care. Plant the seed 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.
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

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