

# SFA

*Seeds for Africa*

## Chives – *Allium Schoenoprasum*

Chives are a very easy plant to grow. A couple of seeds planted in a pot or a corner of an herb garden make a great source of a flavourful herb for soups, dips, and garnish. Chives like sunny spots, but they will tolerate light shade. They like well-drained soil, loaded with organic nutrients, and they like to be kept moist. Even so, chives will tolerate dry conditions for reasonable periods of time. Plant after all danger of frost has passed. Sprinkle on top of the soil and tamp down lightly.

Chives are a perennial herb. The bulbs propagate and sprout new chives year after year. They tend to clump together and like to be divided every couple of years. To do this, just dig up the clumps at the end of the growing season and split them up, replanting where you will. They will winter-over outside in the garden in most climates.

Though not completely immune, chives are highly resistant to insects and diseases that plague many other garden plants. Grown indoors in pots, they like at least 5 hours of sunlight. (Turn them on occasion to ensure they get sun on every side.) They will grow well under fluorescent lights (of which they need about 14 hours).

As a companion, chives make an excellent bed-fellow. They get along well with carrots, tomatoes, peas and lettuce. Tradition has it that planted among roses they will reduce the number of aphids.

Chives can be harvested when the stalks are green, cutting them about two inches from their base. Get them before they flower when the stalks turn tough. (They flower fairly quickly after the first year - by early June in most climates.) The leaves can produce successive crops during the summer. After a couple harvests a little fertilizer may be in order.

Chives like foods that are high in nitrogen. The flowers themselves may be harvested and used on salads, or even floated in a cream soup.

Chives can be stored in the refrigerator either cut up or in bunches. Yet they will not last long in this form. They can be cut up put in small baggies or jars and frozen. Chives can also be dried in a dehydrator. Dried chives may be placed in small jars and stored in the spice cabinet or pantry. In this form they can be used anywhere you might ordinarily use dried onions.

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