

Nodding Onion (Lady's leek)

Allium cernuum



Height: 15 – 45 cm

Suitable for: Sun or partial shade in most soils. Good in containers.

Summary: This is a great edible Allium which we trialled last year. An easy to grow perennial with overhanging flower heads on top of stout slender stems. Each flower head is made up of multiple pinkish purple flowers, suspended individually like a pink chandelier. Both edible and extremely ornamental.

More information:

This Allium is entirely edible – bulb, foliage and flowers! It is however most often grown for its remarkably attractive flowers. This is a hardy perennial herb consisting of a cluster of bulbs. The foliage is broad green blades 15 – 20 cm tall. In mid-summer the flowers are formed on stiff, slender stems sometimes several to each bulb. Each bud opens into hanging clusters of purplish pink flowers – rather like a pink chandelier.

It originated in North America where it was widely used by the native population with both culinary and medicinal uses. It prefers full sun, but will tolerate some shade. Most soils are fine but avoid over-wet positions as this can lead to the bulbs rotting.

The bulbs can be eaten either raw or cooked – but at the expense of the future leaves and flowers! The leaves have a delicious strong onion flavour both raw and cooked. Choose young foliage as the older leaves can be tough. The flowers also have the same flavour and their startling pink colour makes them a decorative addition to the salad bowl.

This is an easy to grow herb with a multitude of uses, most especially its attractive flowers. Grow in the border and herb bed, as a statement plant in a mixed container or even as part of a meadow planting.