Chives

Allium schoenoprasum

Height: Up to 40cm (15in)

Suitable for: Sun and partial shade in moist soil. Pots and tubs.

Summary: Chives are a hardy perennial herb with narrow, round grass like leaves and an onion flavour. Clumps that are not cut regularly for kitchen use, will produce attractive mauve globular flowerheads in mid summer.

More information:

Chives are a well-known culinary herb and the clumps of onion flavoured foliage quickly develop to a good size. It is best to have several clumps of chives in the herb garden if you use it regularly, so that they can be trimmed for the kitchen in rotation. This ensures a continual supply.

Chives start growing early in the year and by late January the first tips of the leaves are visible through the sometimes frozen soil. A clump maybe divided in autumn and a portion brought into the greenhouse in a pot to over winter, this ensures even earlier leaves for the kitchen. By later in the summer, and especially when it is very hot, chive foliage can look a little tired, this is when **garlic chives** come into their own. Whilst slow to start into growth in spring **garlic chives** grow strongly well into the autumn.

As well as a place in the kitchen garden, chives make a neat and pretty edging plant to a border, especially when the plants are allowed to flower.

Chives are a popular addition to salads, vegetable dishes (especially potatoes), soups and eggs. The flavour is lost with cooking so with hot dishes they should always be added at the end or used as a garnish.

Green Rice Salad

150 g basmati rice

1 tbs lemon juice

4 tbs extra virgin olive oil

2 tbs each of chives, parsley and tarragon

75 g cooked french beans (cut into 2cm lengths)

half a green pepper (seeded and diced)

seasoning to taste.

Cook the rice in plenty of boiling water until tender, drain and leave to cool for 10 minutes. Stir in the oil and lemon juice and then the herbs and vegetables and season to taste.

Serve cold, but not chilled, garnished with nasturtium flowers or pot marigold petals.