



Edible and Ornamental Allium

Lily Family

- One of the largest plant families with over 250 genera and almost 4000 species, most characterized by some kind of bulbs or other storage organs
- Includes flowers such as lilies, tulips and hyacinth, and vegetables such as asparagus as well as all allium.

History of Allium

Advantages of growing your own

Site Preparation

- Work compost in deeply to improve drainage
- Add fertilizer to a depth of 5 or 6 inches

Cultivating Allium

- Provide water if rain is inadequate
- Weed frequently
- Mulch to preserve water and suppress weeds
- When growth resumes in Spring add nutrients though
 - Side dressing
 - Foliar feeding

Fertilizers

Bulbing (Dry) Onions (*Allium cepa*)

- Choosing which ones to grow-Consider color, size, flavor, days to maturity, storage quality, day length
- Day Length
 - Short Day (12-14 hours): Torpedo, Maui, Bermuda
 - Long Day (14-16 hours): Walla Walla, White Sweet Spanish
 - Intermediate Day or Day Neutral (14 hours): Superstar, Stockton (all colors), Crimson, Candy
- Storage Quality (White and Yellow Onions)
 - Short Keepers: Superstar, Candy
 - Mid-Keepers: White and Yellow Sweet Spanish, Utah, Walla Walla
 - Good Storage White and Yellow: Southern White Globe, Giant Zittau, Alisa Craig
- Storage Quality (Red Onions)
 - Short-Keepers: Red Torpedo, Stockton Early Red, Red Candy Apple
 - Long-Keepers: Rosso di Milano, Tropeana Tonda, Rossi di Toscano
- Starting Bulbing Onions
 - Sets
 - Seeds
 - Transplants
 - Time planting so that plant is smaller than pencil during coldest months
 - Growing Guidelines for Bulbing Onions
 - Amend soil and fertilize well before planting
 - Space 3-4 inches apart



- Make sure onions are receiving water regularly
- Mulch and keep free of weeds
- Feed once or twice when onions begin to show growth in the spring
- When bulbs are large, necks soften, and about half the leaves turn brown, stop watering and bend remaining leaves down
- Harvesting and Curing Bulbing Onions
 - For fresh eating, dig up when bulbed up
 - To store, leave onions in ground for a week or two after bending down the tops
 - Then pull up and let dry out of direct sun for a few days
 - When tops dry they can be cut off or braided
 - Store in a cool, dry place
 - Using your onions
 - Within varieties use biggest ones and most elongated ones first
 - Hotter varieties usually keep longer than milder, sweeter ones
 - Long day types keep better than short-day types
 - In general white are poorest keepers, red intermediate, and yellow best keepers

Scallions (*Allium fistulosum*)

- Also known as Japanese bunching onions, multiplier onions, Welsh onions, green onions, and Egyptian walking onions
- Grow like bulbing onions but closer together
- Will bolt with age

Garlic (*Allium sativum*, *Allium ophioscorodon*)

- Softneck Garlic (*Allium sativum*) Does not develop scapes
 - Has more cloves per bulb than hardneck, varying in size
 - Tends to be more successful in mild winter climates than hardneck
 - Can be braided
- Hardneck Garlic (*Allium ophioscorodon*) Develops scapes
 - Has fewer cloves per bulb than softneck, but more uniform in size, arranged in a circular layer around the central stem and easier to peel
 - More highly colored and attractive than softneck
 - Difficult to braid
- Planting Garlic
 - Purchase certified disease-free garlic from a nursery or catalog
 - Plant mid-October through November in full sun in moist soil
 - Carefully separate the cloves from each other and the basal plate, keeping the protective wrapper intact
 - Use only the largest cloves
 - Plant flat end (basal plate) down with pointy end about 1" below the surface and gently firm soil
 - Wait until shoots emerge before watering for the first time
- Growing Guidelines:
 - Amend soil well before planting
 - Mulch and keep free of weeds



- Check soil and water if necessary
- Feed once or twice when garlic begins to show growth in the spring
- Stop watering on Mother's Day; harvest on Father's Day
- Rust on garlic
 - Appears as reddish to dull orange oval-shaped pustules on leaf blades
 - Can appear dark later in season due to black teliospores developing within the pustules
 - Appears sporadically and mild infection does little damage to bulbs
 - If severe, destroy all plants and rotate allium away for 2 to 3 years

Elephant Garlic

- Closer to a leek in taste
- Grown like garlic

Shallots

- Growing Guidelines:
 - Traditionally planted as bulbs like garlic
 - Plant, grow and harvest as you do garlic, but allow 6 to 8 inches per plant
 - Recently seeds have become available for planting
 - Plant outside in February, 1/2 inch deep, 2 inches apart for single bulbs, wider for clusters
 - Start inside 10 to 12 weeks earlier
 - Seed started shallots mature later than fall planted bulbs

Leeks

- Growing Guidelines:
 - Plant seeds indoors Dec.-Jan. or outdoors Jan.-March
 - Plant or thin to 3 to 6 inches apart
 - If transplanting, bury leek to the base of the first leek joint
 - Planting in fall is a gamble as leeks are more likely to bolt
 - If you plan to harvest them young (thin) you can plant any time
 - Both summer and winter leeks grow well in our climate; summer leeks are more tender but can withstand our mild winters.
 - As the leek grows, cover the shaft to blanch the stem

Harvesting leeks

- Pull up baby leeks whenever needed
- Harvest mature leeks when over 1" in diameter, usually not until September
- Harvest as needed during the winter
- Carefully loosen up leek so as not to pierce or break
- Complete harvesting by mid-March of year after planting or plants will go to seed

Chives

- Growing Guidelines:
 - Easily grown from seed but slow to mature so better to buy plants from nursery
 - Amend soil well before planting or grow in pots
 - Perennial so choose a permanent location and keep free of weeds



- Fertilize in ground two times a year during growing season (more frequently in pots)
- Divide every 2-4 years in clumps of 6-8 bulbs placed 8" apart
- When harvesting clip leaves at base to stimulate new growth

Garlic Chives

- Growing Guidelines:
 - Can buy from nursery or grow from seed
 - Seed between January and April indoors or directly in the garden
 - Prepare soil as for all allium
 - Keep evenly moist
 - Every few years dig up plant, divide into parts with a shovel, and transplant clumps 18" apart
 - Harvest whole plant and replant next year, or pick individual leaves as needed

Edible Allium as Ornamentals

Ornamental Allium

- Bulbs with single leafless stems topped with roundish flowers
- Also called Flowering Onion and Giant Allium, they are not edible
- Some are fragrant; others smell like onions or garlic, giving off scent only when cut or bruised
- Make durable and attractive cut flowers
- Each head is composed of hundreds of tiny blooms packed tightly together in a globe or loose cluster
- They bloom from spring through summer in colors including white, yellow, pink, reddish, lavender, blue and purple
- Small or medium size allium look striking when planted together in a mass
- Larger ones, sited individually, make striking accents in the garden
- Care of ornamental allium
 - Plant in spring or fall
 - Can be started from seed
 - Most need full sun though some tolerate some shade
 - Grow rapidly in spring, produce blooms, then die back
 - Foliage must be allowed to wither naturally so allium will bloom again in the spring
 - Some require frequent division (about 3 years); others can be left undisturbed for years until fewer blooms signal overcrowding
- Dividing ornamental allium
 - To divide during bloom separate out bulblets from blooming clusters and replant
 - To divide when dormant, remove flower stems after flowering, and in spring separate and replant the tiny bulblets