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# How to Grow Chives: The Complete Guide



Photo Credit: Vlad Antonov

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Botanical Name: | <i>Allium schoenoprasum</i> , <i>Allium tuberosum</i> |
| Plant Type:     | Herb  |
| Season:         | Full Sun  |

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# Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Chive Plants

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

**Last Updated:** April 24, 2025



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Chives are perennial members of the onion family that sport beautiful edible flowers. Plus, they're a wonderful companion plant that helps deter pests. Here's how to grow chives in your garden!

## About Chives: What are Chives?

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Chives are cool-season, cold-tolerant perennials best planted in early to mid-spring for an early summer harvest.

Be mindful when planting this herb, as it

scatter the seeds). However, this plant is easy to dig up and move if it does end up invading other parts of your garden.

Chives are also a wonderful companion plant that deters pests. They're a good friend to plant with carrots, celery, lettuce, peas, and tomatoes.

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## PLANTING

Chives grow best in full sun, though they will tolerate light shade. Ideally, the soil should be moist, fertile, and well-draining. Before planting, incorporate 4 to 6 inches of well-composted organic matter. Work compost into the soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. (Read more about [soil amendments](#) and [preparing the soil for planting](#).)

### When to Plant Chives

- Chives are considered a [cool-season crop](#), meaning they grow best in the spring and fall. The harsher temperatures of summer usually cause them to go dormant until cool weather arrives again.
- For a head start in colder regions, start chive seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before the last spring frost. ([See local frost dates](#).) Transplants need good

- Outdoors, sow seeds as soon as the soil is workable in the spring. They can take a few weeks to germinate, so don't panic! For the best germination and growth, the temperature of the soil should be between 60° and 70°F (15° and 21°C).
- Plant transplants outdoors once the threat of frost has passed.

## How to Plant Chives

- Sow seeds about 2 inches apart and no more than ¼ inch deep. Cover with a thin layer of soil.
- Once seedlings emerge, thin them so that plants are spaced between 4 to 6 inches apart in all directions.



— 2025 —

## How to Grow Chives

- Minimal care is needed for fully grown, established plants.
- Although chives are drought tolerant, it's important to give them consistent watering throughout the growing season for high yields. Moisten the soil thoroughly when watering.
- Chives' small bulbs grow near the soil surface, so use mulch to conserve moisture and keep the weeds down.
- For good production, top-dress with a nitrogen-heavy fertilizer in late spring or early summer if your soil is not already nutrient-rich.
- After the flowers bloom, remove them so that the seeds aren't spread throughout your garden.
- Remember to divide the plants every 3 to 4 years in the spring. Chives are much more productive if divided regularly. Divide them into clumps of at least 10 small bulbs and allow divided plants to grow for several weeks before harvesting.

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The two species of chives commonly grown in home gardens are **common chives** (*Allium schoenoprasum*) and **garlic chives** (*A. tuberosum*):

- **Common chives** consist of clumps of small, slender bulbs that produce thin, tubular, blue-green leaves reaching 10–15 inches in height. The edible, flavorful flowers may be white, pink, purple, or red, depending on the variety. They can be grown in Zones 3 to 9.
- **Garlic chives** (also called **Chinese chives**) look similar to common chives, but their leaves are flatter, greener, and get to be about 20 inches in height. As their name suggests, their leaves have a mild garlic flavor (bulbs are more intense). Flowers are white, and are larger and less densely clustered than those of common chives. Garlic chives are not quite as cold-hardy as common chives, so they are recommended for Zones 4 to 9.

## HARVESTING



- Begin harvesting chive leaves about 30 days after you transplant or 60 days after seeding.
- Be sure to cut the leaves down to the base when harvesting (within 1 to 2 inches of the soil).
- Harvest 3 to 4 times during the first year. In subsequent years, cut plants back monthly.
- The chive plant will flower in late spring or early summer. The flowers are edible and taste best just after they have opened—they should look full and bright.



## How to Store Chives

- Use chives when they're fresh or frozen (freeze the leaves in an airtight

## GARDENING PRODUCTS



## PESTS/DISEASES

- **Bulb rots** (caused by soilborne fungi)
- **White rot**
- Mildew
- Rust
- **Smut**
- **Fungal leaf spots** (such as purple blotch and gray mold)
- **Onion fly**
- Thrips

- In the garden, plant chives next to [carrots](#), [peas](#), [beets](#), and most other crops to deter pests. [Learn more about companion planting.](#)
- Chives are said to repel [aphids](#) and [Japanese beetles](#). Plant them near susceptible plants.
- Bunches of chives hung in the home were used to drive away diseases and evil. Find out [more herbal folklore here.](#)
- Chives are said to symbolize usefulness. Find out [more plant symbolism here.](#)

## RECIPES

**MASHED POTATOES WITH CHIVES**

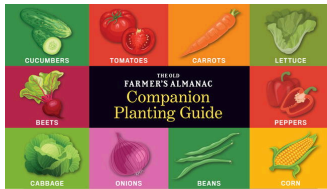
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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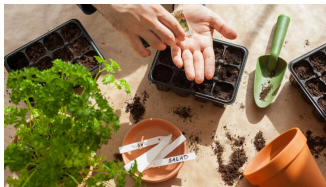
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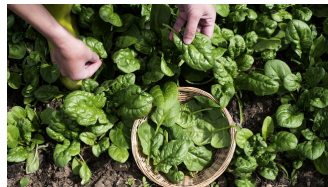
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## COMMENTS

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**Donna DeDiemar (not verified)** 1 month 1 week ago

You mention that chives repel aphids, but anyone who has grown chives knows that they (as well as other allium plants) are a magnet for black aphids. I think it is a mistake to not note aphids as a common pest of chives and tout chives, instead, as a panacea for aphids. Chives are still worth growing, but novices should be forewarned. (I get rid of the aphids simply by

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REPLY

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**Gary (not verified)** 1 month 1 week ago

Do chives have an aroma when they are growing? I love the smell of “wild onions”, what I call them anyway. Was wondering if chives are similar?

REPLY

**Joe Bills** 1 month 1 week ago

Hi Gary,

The strength of the scent varies from one variety to the next, but chives do have an “oniony” aroma while growing.

Cheers,

Joe Bills

Associate Editor

OFA

**Phil (not verified)** 1 year 2 months ago

I pick the blossoms at their peak and put them in a jar with vinegar. It makes a wonderful flavored vinegar and looks beautiful. I give them as gifts.

**REPLY**

**marjory clements (not verified)** 1 year 7 months ago

Can I grow chives on a hill where the soil is dry and not deep. What do I need to insure the seeds do well. Do I need to add any fertilizer when planting

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 1 year 7 months ago

Dear Marjory,

Thanks for your note. Chives are a wonderful perennial herb once established. The spot you describe could

seeds, we recommend starting chive seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before the last spring frost. ([See local frost dates](#).) Transplants need good growth before being set in the garden. If you are sowing outdoors, do so as soon as soil is workable; they can take a few weeks to germinate, and prefer soil temperature to be between 60° and 70°F to do so.

—The Editors

REPLY

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**Bonnie (not verified)** 1 year 11 months ago

Can I plant chives in a container and bring inside in the fall?

REPLY

**Roxanne Bassett (not verified)** 1

year 10 months ago



[REPLY](#)

**Jennifer Keating** 1 year 11 months ago

You absolutely can! This is a great way to have fresh herbs through the winter months.

[REPLY](#)

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**Cheryl L March (not verified)** 2 years 10 months ago

I'm new to vegetable gardening and I didn't know there was so much to learn but good because I won't be bored. I've been trying for weeks to find the best time to sow garlic chives in lower Michigan zone 6. I'm going to start keeping track of the dates I do things and such so I'll find it easier next year.

[REPLY](#)[MORE COMMENTS](#)

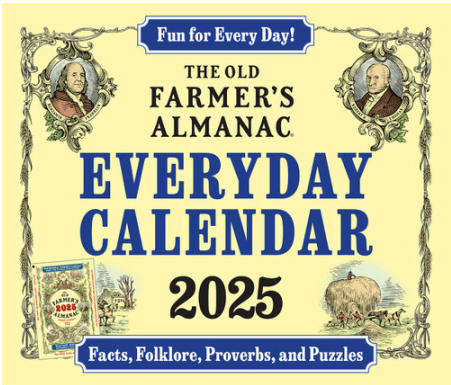
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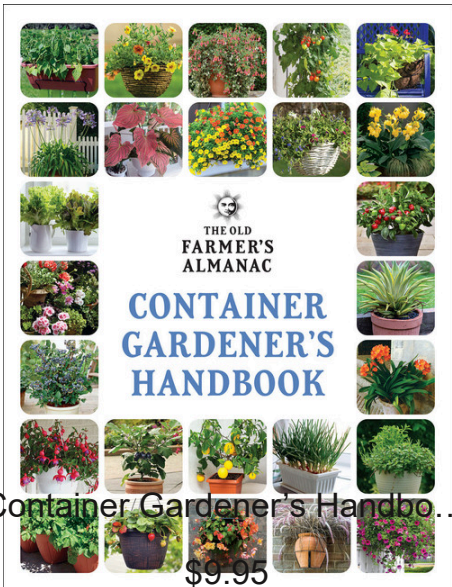
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