

Common Name: **Chive**

Genus: *Allium*

Species: *schoenprasum*

Family: *Amaryllidacea*

AKA: Rush-leeks, Cives, Civet, Sweth, Wild Leeks



Historical Uses:

Medical: “They are indeed a kind of leeks. If they be eaten raw they send up very hurtful vapours to the brain, causing troublesome sleep, and spoiling the eye-sight; yet of them, prepared by the art of the alchymist, may be made an excellent remedy for the stoppage of urine.” (1)

“Cives attenuate or make thinne, open, provoke urine, ingender hot and grosse vapours, and are hurtful to the eye and braine. They cause troublesome dreames, and worke all the effects that the Leeke doth.” (2)

Folklore/Astrology: hot and dry in the fourth degree, and so under the dominion of Mars. (3)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Leaves, bulbs, flowers.

Culinary: “Chives are especially good with potatoes and eggs. Leaves are used to garnish and flavor soups and salads, and in soft cheeses, omelettes, and sauces such as *remoulade* and *ravigote*. Chopped chives and onions flavor Cotswold cheese (England). Individual flowers are added to salads.” (4)



The Chive contains a pungent volatile oil, rich in sulphur, which is present in all the Onion tribe and causes their distinctive smell and taste. It is a great improvement to salads- cut fresh and chopped fine- and may be put not only into green salads, but also into cucumber salad, or sprinkled on sliced tomatoes. Chives are also excellent in savoury omelettes, and may be chopped and boiled with potatoes that are to be mashed, or chopped fresh and sprinkled, just before serving, on mashed potatoes, both as a garnish and flavouring. They may also be put into soup, either dried, or freshly cut and finely



chopped, and are a welcome improvement to homemade sausages, croquettes, etc., as well as an excellent addition to beefsteak puddings and pies. Chives are also useful for cutting up and mixing the food of newly-hatched turkeys.” (5)

Area of Origin: Native to the northern Europe

Physical description: Clump forming perennial with slender bulb.

Plant type: Perennial

Form: Upright

Height: 18in

Flower color: Pale purple to pink, rarely white, bell-shaped flowers.

Flowering period: Summer

Soil type/requirements: Rich well drained soil, but this species tolerates wetter conditions heavier soil, and a less open position than most other alliums.(6)

Hardiness zone: USDA zone 3-9

Sun requirements: Full sun.

Propagation: By seed sown in spring; by bulbs planted when dormant.

Sources

1. Culpeper, pg. 37
2. Gerard, pg. 177
3. Culpeper, pg. 37
4. Bown, pg. 114-115
5. Grieve, pg. 200-201
6. Bown, pg.114-115

Illustrations/Images:

1. Fuch’s Herbal 1543
2. PSUMG 2005