

Growing Chives



Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) are part of the large onion family (*Alliaceae*) but are much quicker and easier to grow than onions as they are grown for their tasty leaves. They have tubular or flat, green, tangy leaves. The flat-leaved form has a garlic flavour and is known as garlic chives (*A. tuberosum*).

Finely chopped, they add a gentle onion flavour to foods such as salads and sandwiches and are used as a garnish to vegetables, especially potatoes as well as eggs, stews and soups. Chives team well with sour cream.

Chives also make a wonderful border around the veggie patch and fruit orchards. They have the added benefit of their flowers being highly attractive to pollinators and beneficial insects.

Mature plants produce flowers in summer. These form on rigid stems that are held above the clump. Ordinary chives have heads of small purple flowers, while garlic chives produce larger heads of small white flowers. The buds and flowers are edible and make an attractive garnish, especially in a summer salad or potato dish.

Follow our seven easy steps to a successful chive harvest including tips along the way.

When to plant

Chives can be grown in most parts of Australia. Check with hardware and garden centres for varieties available in your local area.

- In cool and cold climates - from spring after the last frost has passed until autumn.
- In warm and temperate regions - September onwards.
- In subtropical and tropical climates - most of the year.

Location

- Chives grow best in full sun or light shade.
- In cooler climates, ensure your chives have at least six hours of sun each day.
- Plant chives in herb or vegetable gardens, or around fruit trees.
- Containers or small pots on a sunny kitchen windowsill are also great planting options.

Soil

Get the soil right for a bumper harvest of fresh chives. Follow our steps for easy soil preparation.

- Chives tolerate a wide range of soils but prefer a beautiful, rich soil full of organic matter.
- Improve the soil by digging in homemade compost and organic matter and/or **Seasol Super Compost**.
- In areas with poorly drained soils, grow chives in raised garden beds or containers. When growing chives in containers, use a premium potting mix such as **Seasol Advanced Potting Mix**, which has everything in the bag to help them flourish.
- A soil rich in nutrients helps build strong plants, so add **Seasol Plant + Soil Booster** (100g per square metre) and a fertiliser such as **PowerFeed Controlled Release Tomatoes & Vegetables**.
- Water in well and let the soil rest for a week or two before planting.



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1. Sowing seeds



- Grow chives from seed sown thinly into a punnet or seed tray filled with seed raising mix such as **Seasol Seed Raising & Cutting Potting Mix**.
- Seeds can also be sown directly where plants are to be grown. Sow 3 or 4 seeds at 5mm deep, 15cm apart, in rows 15cm apart. Lightly cover with soil or seed raising mix.
- Water in well with **Seasol GOLD** or **Seasol**, as this will help to increase seed germination rates. Soil should be moist but not wet, so check the soil moisture daily to ensure chive seeds have the right conditions to germinate.
- When sowing into pots, grow them in medium to large pots that are 30-40cm high and wide.

3. Baby chive seedlings



- Chives tend to start off as small clumps and grow to be around 30cm x 30cm. To avoid overcrowding, thin out so there is 15cm between each seedling and transplant the rest.
- If not transplanting, use scissors or tweezers to thin out seedlings to avoid disturbing young roots.
- Chive seedlings need to be fed to develop and grow, so liquid feed with **PowerFeed PRO SERIES for Tomatoes & Vegetables** every two weeks. Increase the application rates from 20mL to 50mL of concentrate per 9 litres of water as the plants mature.
- Check soil moisture daily and water as needed.

2. Germination

- Seeds take around 7 to 14 days to germinate when the temperature is around 18 to 21 degrees. They can take longer (up to 21 days) when the weather is cooler.
- If growing seeds in cooler weather ready for when the weather warms, protect young seedlings from frost by leaving them inside in a warm position or use a heating pad.
- Apply **Seasol GOLD** or **Seasol** weekly (mix 40mL of concentrate per 9 litres of water) as this will help to stimulate strong root development and healthy growth.
- Protect from snails, slugs and the weather especially while shoots are emerging (See "Things to watch out for..." below).



4. Planting out chive seedlings

- Transplant seedlings into the garden or pot when they are around 10 to 15cm high and large enough to handle. Be careful not to distribute the clumping root system.
- Space clumps of chives at least 15cm apart.
- Seedlings are also available from hardware and garden centres, ready to plant in pots or the garden. Follow the instructions for the plant according to the directions on the plant tag.
- Check the moisture level of the soil daily and water when needed. Apply mulch around seedlings to retain moisture.



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5. Chive plant growth



- Keep developing plants hand weeded or hoed and well watered. Weeds around chives can reduce air circulation and lead to disease.
- Mulch around each plant with organic mulch such as sugarcane, lucerne or pea straw to help suppress weeds.
- Remove damaged and brown leaves when checking plants to encourage new healthy growth.
- Apply **PowerFeed PRO SERIES for Tomatoes & Vegetables** and **Seasol GOLD** or **Seasol** regularly for tasty chives.
- Bolting can occur when the plant flowers prematurely (often due to stress of soil moisture or very hot temperatures). Ensure plants have enough water, especially during times of heat.

7. Propagating chives



- Chives can easily be divided from an established clump into several smaller clumps in spring. This should be done every couple of years to stop clumps from getting overcrowded.
- Simply dig the chive clump up and using a sharp knife cut it into half or quarters depending on its size.
- Dig a hole larger than the clump and replant into soil prepared with organic manure, compost and/or **Seasol Super Compost**. Clumps can also be transplanted into a container using a premium potting mix such as **Seasol Advanced Potting Mix**.
- Water in with **Seasol** to aid plant establishment, a strong root system and healthy growth.

6. Chive harvest



- Chives can be harvested from 60 to 90 days from sowing or at any time using sharp scissors.
- Cut the leaves close to the base of the plant, but for continuing growth, never harvest more than a 1/3 of the plant and take the outer leaves.
- Use regular chive harvests in your favourite recipes to promote more leaf growth. If you don't want to use the flowers or need the seeds, pruning them will encourage more leaf growth. Flowers can be used in salads.
- The morning is the best time to harvest when leaves are lush and juicy. Put the leaves into water or a plastic bag to keep them fresh.
- If your garden space allows, leave some plants to flower to set seed and also to provide nectar for pollinating insects.



Things to watch out for...

Chives are relatively trouble free and easy to grow.

- **Rust** A fungal disease that causes brown to orange raised spots on leaves. Improve air circulation and remove the worst affected leaves. Also, keep clumps clear of invasive grasses such as twitch that can be difficult to remove from clumps and can overwhelm the plants.
- **Snails and slugs** They like to eat juicy young shoots so protect plants with an organic treatment such as a beer trap or sawdust sprinkled around the plant or use pet-friendly snail pellets.
- **Aphids** They love to attack new young growth, especially on garlic chives. If the infestation is small, wipe them off with your hand (wear gloves) or spray with the hose. For a large infestation use **EarthCare Natural Pyrethrum insect spray**.



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