

Chives

By Kathleen Cue, Nebraska Extension Horticulture Educator in Dodge County

Of all the herbs in my herb garden, chives are the earliest to send out their slender stems in spring. So even when the vegetable garden isn't producing yet, I can add something fresh to the food I'm preparing by heading outside to snip some chives. They add a nice mildly onion-y taste to salads and they look great on baked potatoes. This perennial plant is not only easy to grow but its frost resistance makes it a colorful contribution to the table from early spring until late in the fall.

Chives are easy to grow from seed in the spring. Prepare a seed bed and gently press seeds into the soil. Cover seeds lightly with soil and moisten them with a gentle sprinkle of water. Mark the spot and in about 14-28 days, you'll see tiny slender stalks emerging from the soil. Keep the seedlings evenly moist as they grow. If started indoors, plants should be hardened off (acclimated) before planting them in their permanent place. If started outdoors, be sure to choose a location that gets more than 6 hours of direct uninterrupted sunlight daily.

Chive plants can also be readily found in nurseries and garden centers. When planted, they'll appreciate a location with lots of sunlight and a soil high in organic matter. Keep plants watered during dry spells to keep them producing. More plants can be obtained by dividing existing plants. Once clumps get larger than 10 inches across, division is a good idea to keep plants healthy and producing lots of tender stems.

A quick word about chives and garlic chives. Both require similar growing conditions and are quite tasty, but, left to their own devices, garlic chives are thugs and can be RAMPANT in the garden. Both regular chives and garlic chives have flowers, but where the two types differ is that while regular chives may have a few seedling volunteers around the parent plant, garlic chives will have a massive number of seedlings. Herbicides do little in the way of controlling the unwanted progeny, so clipping and removing flowers is the easiest way to keep garlic chives from dominating the herb garden. Thankfully, the flowers of both chives and garlic chives are a wonderful edible garnish for salads and sandwiches.

More information about growing herbs can be found here:

<https://grobigrad.com/2017/05/19/growing-requirements-for-selected-culinary-herbs/> .