

## SAVORY

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If you prefer to eat as much as possible out of the garden, spring is the narrows of allium availability: storage bulbs are sprouting, overwintered leeks are beginning to bolt, this season's onion sets have just been planted, and fall-planted garlic and shallots are just now peeking out of the soil.

Luckily, lush, green spring has its own brand of alliums, enlisting fresh, herbal flavors, sweetness, and succulence in place of shelf-stable bulbs. Similar to the way sprouts (like alfalfa or sunflower) are dense with plant nutrients, so too are the green shoots of young alliums.

While the blanket term "green onions" may be the most familiar, it doesn't do justice to the wealth of spring allium flavors available to the savvy gardener. Grocery store produce is limited by distribution systems and purchasing trends; your garden is as prolific and unconventional as your imagination. Seed catalogs offer up to a dozen different kinds of spring-focused onion varieties. Try a new seed source to broaden your garden's selection. Two Oregon companies with a particularly good inventory of green onions and leeks are Nichols Garden Nursery and Territorial Seeds, both with online stores.

And then there are the sort of harvests that you can coax out of your spring garden with just a good sense of timing — side-products, really, of the main attractions, but a delicacy all the same. Many of the garden plants we think of as annuals — lettuce, kale, carrots, and some alliums, for example — are actually biennials, plants that grow vegetation in their first year, flowers (and seeds) in their second. If allowed to overwinter (and all of these can, even without a greenhouse), the spring of their second year triggers flowering shoots, a phenomenon gardeners commonly refer to as bolting.

Bolting is a term that usually connotes the end of the edible stage of the plant, but it



Photo by Sarah West

### Scallions

doesn't have to. Many flowering stems offer a tasty finale and are one of the treasures of a spring garden. The following alliums are some of my favorite spring treats, as ephemeral as snap peas or strawberries and embodying the savory side of this verdant season.

### Scallions

Also called green onions, bunching onions, or spring onions, they are one of two things: a variety of onion that never produces a bulb or a bulb-producing onion that has been picked before the bulb develops. The difference is horticultural and not particularly significant when it comes to flavor.

However, true scallions (those that will never produce an onion) are one of the most nutritionally dense vegetables in the garden, boasting 140 times more phytonutrients than a typical white onion. Eaten fresh, they promise peak flavor and powerful nutrition in a small but versatile package. Chop and add scallions to almost anything or slather whole ones in oil, salt and pepper to taste, and throw them on the grill until they just begin to char. Some nutrients are lost in the process, but what remains is

the best burger topping I can think of. Choose a true scallion variety for maximum nutrition. For an adventure, try 'Evergreen,' a hardy perennial variety that produces scallion tops year-round.

### Chives

Chives and their attractive purple flowers are one of the first edible alliums to appear in spring. A perennial, chives offer convenience (plant once, harvest for years) and two distinct edibles — leafy green shoots and bright purple flowers that are as attractive in a vase as they are delicious sprinkled on anything you can think of. Consider chives and their flowers as spring's perfect condiment, adding a dash of oniony sweetness and densely packed nutrients to eggs, salads, pastas, and much more. Though their green shoots toughen slightly as summer heats up, they remain harvestable until the first hard freeze and return in early spring, all with little effort on your part.

### Salad onions

Salad onions, sometimes also called spring or summer onions, are a variety of sweet, bulbing onion harvested before they reach maturity.

Their juicy baby bulbs and tender green tips are delicious raw or roasted. Like scallions, they are one of my favorite spring vegetables to grill: the bulb caramelizes into silky, smoky sweetness while the green tops get a little singed, adding crispy, toasted onion seasoning to whatever you toss them with. Try them in a grilled vegetable medley served over cous cous or quinoa, finished with a sprinkling of chopped fresh mint and feta cheese.

### Garlic scallions

Garlic scallions are the scallion's garlicky cousin — immature garlic plants pulled while their bulb-ends are still tender and straight. Sliced thinly, they may be added raw to salads or used as a garnish. They are slightly more fibrous than onion scallions; roasting or sautéing them both deepens their garlic flavor and softens their texture. Try them anywhere you'd put garlic: minced into stews, pureed into soups & sauces, sprinkled on pizza, or as a quiche filling, in which the combination of garlic-roma and fresh allium brightness pairs perfectly with eggy creamy richness.

Harvesting garlic scallions means sacrificing the bulb garlic the plant would otherwise produce. To avoid reducing my garlic harvest, I typically set aside the smallest cloves when planting in the fall. Once I've dug in all the best cloves for my garlic patch, I plant the runts in a separate patch (they can also be spaced closer together) specifically for garlic scallions, so I can have the best of both worlds. A month or two after I've harvested all of my garlic scallions, the rest of the garlic plants will start putting on scapes, their flowering shoot. It's both good horticultural practice and a bonus for the kitchen to remove scapes while they're still tender, using their grassy garlic flavor anywhere you would a green onion.

### Leeks

Leek Scapes or shoots are the leafless flower stems of a leek plant. Unlike garlic

or shallot scapes that can be clipped off just above the leaves, leek scapes are best harvested by pulling out the whole plant once the flowering shoot has grown about four inches above the leaves (but has not yet bloomed). The blanched white stalk that leeks are best known for is still edible at this stage, and may be prepared by slicing it up to the point where it transitions to green leaves. Peel back the leaves until you get to the firm but tender central stalk, extracting it from the sheaf of tough, winter-weathered leaves (for a no-waste harvest, use these leaves to make a sumptuous broth before throwing them in the compost).

If you wait too long, the scape will become stiff like a young tree branch and unpleasant to eat. At the ideal harvest stage, they should be rubbery and easy to cut with a knife. The entire stalk and flower bud are edible and delicious, something like leek-flavored asparagus. When my leek patch starts to bolt, I harvest them all at once so I don't miss their narrow harvest window, slicing the white bases into rounds and tossing them (raw) into the freezer to

add to soups and sautés later, and extracting the scapes to cook now.

*Sarah West is a writer, cook, and gardener who lives in Cove. She is fascinated by the stories lurking behind vegetable varieties: their flavors, uses, and ability to create or sustain a sense of place. She'll be exploring those topics in this column, and hopes to entice you to a potluck at some point.*



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## GARDEN

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### Garden Tips and Chores

- Protect bees and other pollinating insects by not spraying insecticides while fruit trees are blooming.
- Soaker hoses and drip systems help save money on water.
- Mount a rain gauge on a post near the garden to keep track of precipitation

so you can tell when to water. Most gardens need about 1 inch of rain per week between April and September.

- Thin spots and bare patches in the lawn can be over-seeded now.
- Flower stalks should be removed from rhubarb plants, if they develop.
- Enjoy but do not disturb the many woodland wildflowers.
- When buying bedding plants choose compact, bushy plants that have not begun to flower.

• Groundcovers can be mowed to remove winter burn and tidy plants up. Raise mowers to their highest settings. Fertilize and water to encourage rapid re-growth.

- When crabapples are in bloom, hardy annuals may be transplanted outdoors.
- Hold off fertilizing your roses until the new growth is 2 inches long.

For garden comments and questions, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

## DORY

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Did they drink their milk warm as soon as it came from the cow or even after it ran through the separator, parting the cream from the milk so that it could be used separately in making butter or real whipped cream?

Milk never came in degrees of combination from whole milk down to ten-percent or skim milk or fat free. The cream rose to the top of the bottle and was poured-off for other uses or purchased separately in glass pints or half-pints. It just came as it was from the cow until the cream was skimmed from the tops of the milk pans on the pantry shelf or later poured from the milk-pail through the new separator with spigots for milk and cream.

My mother, aunt and uncles drove the horse and

wagon to deliver in town from the hill, carried in tandem the handles on the sides of five-gallon milk cans to the downtown creamery in exchange for butter or cash; then my aunt and her family hand-carried pails or bottles to customers from their home on B Avenue once the dairy on the hill closed down. Neighbors with cows gave or sold to neighbors without cows, maybe even in exchange for eggs or garden vegetables or fruit from their trees.

The glass milk bottle came before the waxed cardboard carton in square containers quieted the clinking of the glass bottle and could be put in the garbage once the contents was used, the dairy source easily printed on the sides of the cartons. I believe I was in the fourth grade (1935?) when these cartons brought milk or chocolate milk to our school desk at

rest-time for a few pennies.

It wasn't until 1997 that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) passed a law against the sale of raw milk and pasteurization went into effect.

From then on the milk could be purchased in plastic gallon jugs, easier to carry with a handle on top or a finger hold on the side.

My, how things have changed, I thought as I held one of the glass milk bottles in my hands and considered its long history and demise.

The crate of bottles had a history in just my own lifetime from when my grandparents and then my aunt and uncle ran the Hofmann Dairy from the ranch along the Mill Canyon Creek and Road. And, when it went out of business from milking, bottling, and delivering, the bottles still held me in memory. It was in playing

delivery with my cousin Billy in loading water-filled bottles into the crates on the wagon, pretending driving the horse to pretend places in town, returning and then unloading the bottles from the crates back to the milk-house from the now horseless-drawn wagon.

I've wondered since who got the wagon and what had been done with it.

The wire crate of glass milk bottles was all that remained of that era part of my life.

When did it become unknown to the younger generation?

I washed one of the bottles and set it on the table where I could remember those days so long ago forgotten by most or not even known by many of today's youth and adults. It seemed so very sad, for there was much to be learned from those early days, learning by doing.

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