

Leek — *Allium ampeloprasum* L. (Porrum group)¹

James M. Stephens²

The leek is a biennial that is grown as an annual for its long blanched or unblanched stems. It forms a thick, fleshy structure like a large green onion plant without a bulb. It is attractive in appearance with its silvery base and green top.



Figure 1.

cooked dishes. A favorite dish for many gardeners is leek soup.

CULTURE

Leeks can withstand a considerable amount of exposure to temperatures below 32°F. Start leeks from seeds or transplants in the fall and grow them very much like onions. Leeks require almost 5 months from seeding to harvest when grown in the winter in Florida.

Leek varieties that have done well in Florida trials are 'Electra,' which has a short shank (bulbous portion), and 'King Richard,' which has a longer shank.

DESCRIPTION AND USE

The leaves of some varieties are blue-green, while others are yellow-green. The leaves are flat, in contrast to the round ones of the onion, and are arranged in a fan-like manner. The thick leaf bases and slightly developed bulb are eaten as a cooked vegetable or raw with or without attached leaves. The green leaves may be eaten and have a pungent odor and acrid taste. They are used more for flavoring in salads and

1. This document is HS620, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date May 1994. Revised March 2009. Reviewed February 2012. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. James M. Stephens, professor, Horticultural Sciences Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.