

ANOTHER
HERB HERBERT
FACT SHEET

SPECIAL INTEREST HERBS

EGYPTIAN WALKING ONION



Herbaceous Perennial
Allium cepa var. 'proliferum'
Family: Liliaceae

DESCRPTION
Onions and shallots are both forms of *Allium cepa* and are closely related to Leeks, Chives, Garlic and Chinese Chives. All these belong to the genus *Allium* and have the characteristic onion smell, caused by sulphur compounds, alkyl-sulphides.

The Egyptian Walking Onion also known as the Tree Onion, grows from an onion-type bulb producing hollow, round, green leaves and a strong, hollow stem about 50 cm high which, instead of only flowers, produces a cluster of small bulbils. These are greenish and then turn white and if left will produce more leaves and barren stems. The weight of this top set often causes the stem to bend over so that the small onions take root in the ground, away from the main plant, this is what gives it the name walking onion. The tree onion also forms several off-shoots around the parent bulb and is perennial.

Allium cepa is divided into 3 main groups, the *Cepa* group are common onions; the *Proliferum* group include the Egyptian Walking Onions and the *Catawissa* Onions; and the *Aggregatum* group are shallots, ever-ready onions and potato onions.

USES
For culinary purposes, Egyptian Walking Onions can be used either cooked or raw.

They add a wonderful sweet onion flavour to soups, stews and other cooked meat and vegetable dishes. Use raw or pickled for salads or eat with bread and cheese or add to an antipasto. Use the leaves as you would chives.

A spray made by chopping the onion bulbs with the skin, and mixing with water is said to give some garden plants a resistance to disease, as well as being a useful spray for insects such as aphids and mites. As a companion plant all onions can be planted with good results with cabbages, broccoli, carrots and silver beet. They do not however like to be planted with peas, beans or sage.

CULTIVATION
Egyptian Walking Onions can be propagated from the bulbils, or from division of the bulbs but this is less

satisfactory. They should be set 5 cm deep about 30 cm apart and like a light, rich soil and a sunny situation similar to all other *Alliums*. The small bulbils usually take a year to grow to size before producing top sets of their own. They can be harvested alone or the whole plant lifted and dried like garlic. Plants should be lifted and reset in new soil every three years.

RECIPES
Here is a recipe for a simple but delicious flat omelette.

FRITTATA DI CIPOLLE ONION OMELETTE

- 400g (1/2 lb) Egyptian Walking Onions, peeled and chopped
- 2 thick Rashers of Bacon, chopped
- 1 teaspoon Mint, finely chopped
- 8 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- Handful of fresh basil

In a heavy pan gently cook bacon, Walking Onions and mint until soft. Remove from heat and set aside. Add tomatoes to warm onion mixture to allow to soften.

Tear basil into coarse pieces and mix with the beaten eggs along with the cheese. Add the onion mix to the eggs. Pour mixture into a non stick pan and cook gently until egg is set and golden on the bottom. Turn it out on a plate and slide it back into the pan to brown the other side. Serve warm Or cold.



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