

WILD ONION

Allium hyalinum Kellogg

plant symbol = ALHY

Contributed by: USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center



Gladys L. Smith
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Alternate Names

Many species of *Allium* are known by the common name "wild onion."

Uses

Ethnobotanic: The young foliage of *Allium* species is delicious and can be used in the place of chives. This onion was a food of the Tabatulabal and probably many other tribes as well. Sometimes the bulb was eaten raw. Today, individuals of many tribes still gather different species of wild onions.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status and wetland indicator values.

Description

General: Lily Family (Liliaceae). This herbaceous perennial plant has herbage with the characteristic taste and smell of onions. The scape is 15-45 cm high and the leaves are 2-3 and linear. Reproduction is from wrinkled, black seeds contained in a capsule or by ovoid to spherical bulbs. The bulb-coats are brown or gray, thin, with horizontal undulate reticulation in vertical rows. Five to 25 pale pink to

white flowers are in an umbel subtended by 2 or 3 thin whitish or scarious bracts.

Distribution

For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site. This plant is found from 50 to 1500 m in moist areas in grassy slopes and mosses on rocks in the Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley.

Establishment

Dig up the bulbs of plants that are in bloom or seed or purchase the bulbs and plant them in the ground in autumn. The bulbs should be planted 1 to 3 inches deep in a well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade. *Allium* species do especially well in raised beds for drainage. Water them after planting and then let the rains come. Weed around the plants. Most animals don't eat wild onions. This species of wild onion can be invasive.

If establishing the plant by seed, plant the seeds in the fall in pots in partial shade. Scatter the seeds on top of a well-drained soil. Sprinkle a thin layer of dirt over the top and place quarter-inch gravel over the soil. Water the pots and keep them slightly moist. Stop watering when the leaves shrivel in the early summer. Plant the plants out in the garden or wildlands after two years in the summer or fall. Let the rains do the watering.

Management

Separate the plants every several years and replant.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

ALHY is available from native plant nurseries within its range. Please check the Vendor Database, expected to be on-line through the PLANTS Web site in 2001 by clicking on Plant Materials.

References

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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