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*Allium*

*Alliaceae*

*Allium* is derived originally for some authorities from Celtic *all* (pungent, burning), and for others it is a classical Latin name for garlic (*Allium sativum*).

One of the Chinese common names for it means ‘jewel among vegetables’.

Although garlic tends to be the only *Allium* species used medicinally all species in the family have the same qualities to a greater or lesser degree.

Cultivated species can be poisonous for animals eg. authorities note that horses and cattle have been poisoned with cultivated onions (*Allium cepa*) in North America, and horses have been poisoned with cultivated chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) in Japan.

Under a broad heading of environmental issues, there are varieties in this genus which provide/have provided for some authorities instances of the less desirable effects of modern economic or political intervention. For example seeds of the Irish potato onion (not specifically shown below) are now only available in the United Kingdom from seed-lending libraries. Apparently this variety gained a useful reputation in that one’s eyes do not water when peeling it. But the European Economic Community has excluded it from its approved list of vegetable varieties and this means that, technically, it cannot be sold – or even given away – within the Community’s boundaries.