

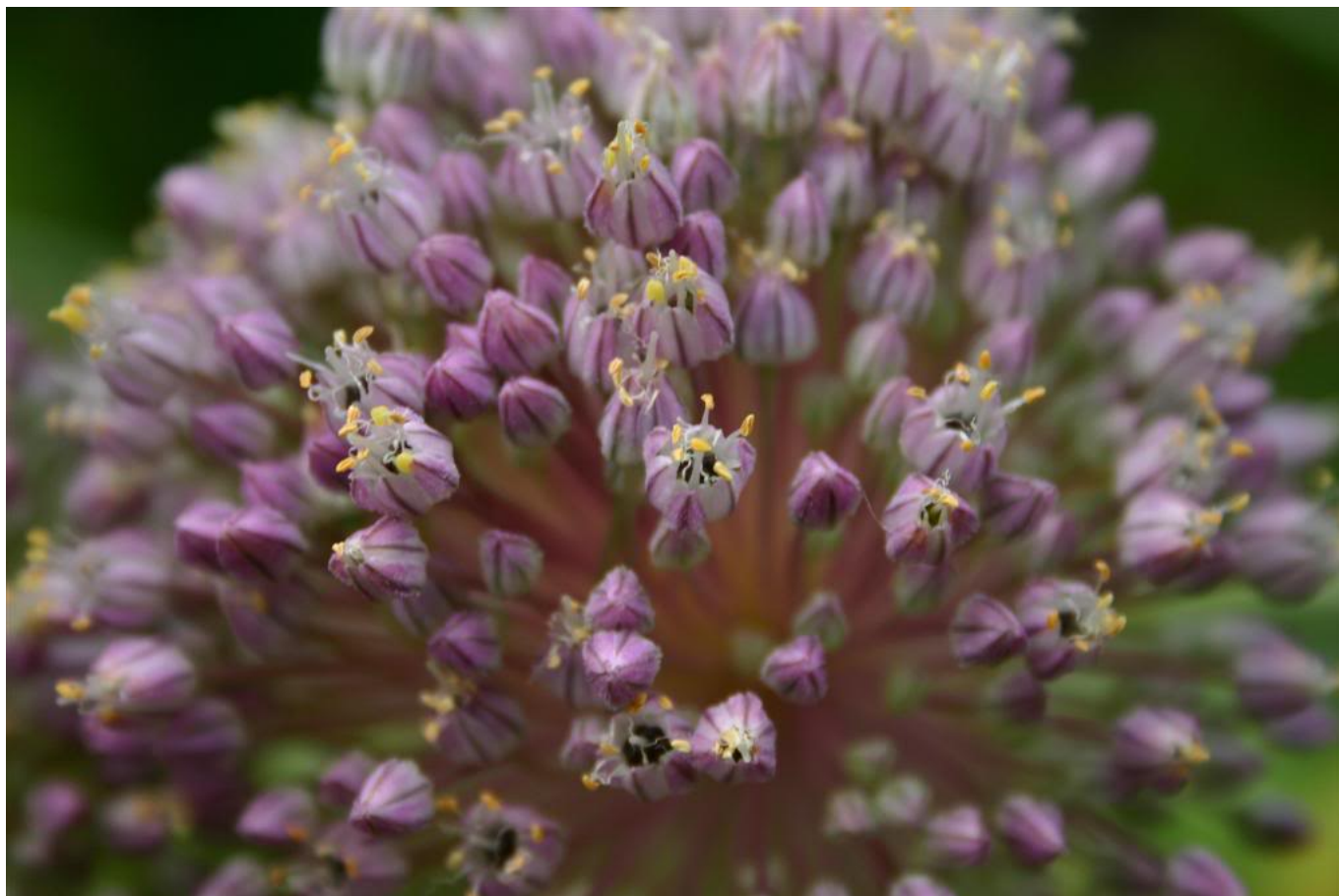
The Wild Leek from Malta

Article taken from the bananabeltgardening.com forum, and the article and photos are by Peggy A. Rowe-Snyder

The Wild Leek from Malta *Allium commutatum* Here is an interesting plant for you to consider growing! The Wild Leek from Malta. This is a very hardy and robust plant that is drought tolerant. It does well in sun or shade though it seems to prefer sun. And the humming birds and butterflies love it! This plant has a stout and tall flowering stem (called a scape) that produces a ball of numerous, lilac-purple flowers. It is said that the flowers have a strong garlic odor; mine do not have a strong odor. Though it does have the odor alright! "This is a perennial and highly variable plant is developed from an underground bulb having a cream-colored tunic. Small bulbils are initially retained in the tunic. "The leaves are up to 19 inches long in larger specimen and found sheathing the lower third of the scape. They are flat (like garlic) and often bent inwards toward the longitudinal axis to form a channel-like, tapering leaf blade, from a 1/3 to 1 inch broad. The underside of the leaves have a keeled (longitudinally bulging) midrib. This and the blade margins are minutely toothed. "By the mid-April, the leaves start to dry off while the scape keeps growing higher. The spathe is spherical body with a flimsy, thin tip; longer from the spathe itself. At blossoming, the leaves would have dried off completely and the papery spathe falls off. This plant forms a ball-shaped umbel of densely packed flowers that can measure up to around 3 ½ inches across. It is estimated that such a flower-head may possess up to 500 individual flowers. These bloom in June in Southern Oregon and make it through the snowy winters just fine!



“Each flower is about 2 inches long and its color varies from one specimen to another between pale lilac to purple-violet. Usually they have darker stipes, each found at the centre of each tepal. Each flower is held to the scape by a firm, spreading pedicel. The 6 identical tepals (perianth segments) overlap each other forming a closed, bell-shaped structure with a small apical opening. The cross section of the corolla is three-angled rather than perfectly circular. “The stamens have filaments slightly longer than the tepals and so their anthers are found just outside the rim of the corolla. The anthers are initially pale purple and becomes covered with yellow pollen when the burst open. The green, globose ovary and its small style are hidden inside the corolla. After fertilization, the perianth segments, and stamens fall off leaving a small fruitcapsule. When ripe the capsule splits open into 3 longitudinal compartments to liberate its tiny, black seeds.”



These plants can be grown from seed and bought over the internet. Another way to grow them is to dig up the bulbs, and separate the groups and replant the bulbs where you want them. The bulbs are very hardy, I planted 2 year old bulbs this spring, and not one of them had died! I can see where this could become considered a weed it is so hardy!!!



If you want some bulbs, talk to me!!! Notes: This article is a mix of my experience and article I found on the internet. It can be found here:

http://www.maltawildplants.com/LILI/Allium_commutatum.html The pictures are from the plants in my yard.



Peg

