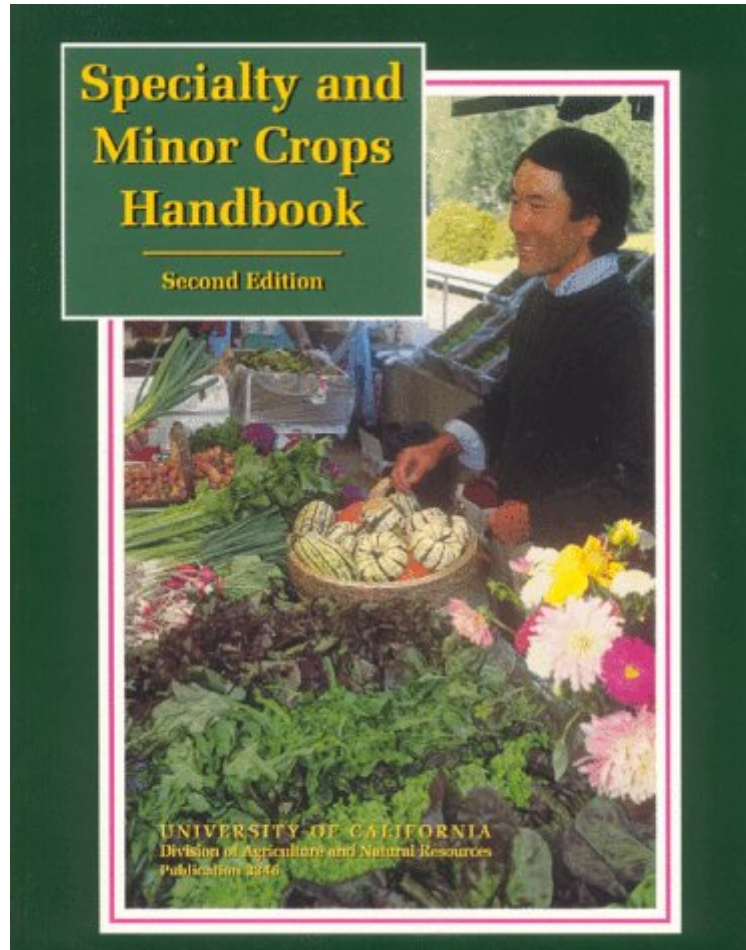


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Specialty and Minor Crops Handbook, 2nd Edition

Claudia Myers

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#2631416 in Books Univ of California Agriculture Natural Resources 1998-02-01 1998-02-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 10.90 x .60 x 8.40 | #File Name: 1879906384184 pages | File size: 63.Mb

Claudia Myers : Specialty and Minor Crops Handbook, 2nd Edition before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Specialty and Minor Crops Handbook, 2nd Edition:

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Handy for commercial producers as well as backyard gardeners, this useful guide for growers and sellers of niche market produce provides detailed information about growing specialty crops that are growing in popularity among consumers. Includes 63 crop sheets from arugula to radicchio, basil to thyme, prickly pear to tomatillos, variety and heirloom tomatoes. Includes market information, resources, a glossary of Asian vegetable names, and an updated bibliography.

"This handbook will encourage farmers to make intelligent decisions about crops that can be grown profitably." --

Frieda Caplan of Frieda's Finest Produce Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Leeks. Related to onions, chives, and garlic, the leek develops a broad succulent stem rather than a large bulb like an onion. The mature stem is about 1 inch thick and 6 to 8 inches long from roots to the top of the neck; above the neck is a fanlike sheaf of flat, blue-green or yellow-green leaves that may grow another foot or two in length. Types vary in the length and thickness of the leaf shanks (pseudo-stem). Baby leek is a popular specialty item and command a higher price per pound than larger leeks (i.e., greater than 1 inch in diameter), but most leeks are sold at full size. Packing with top ice is highly desirable if you want to maintain the best quality. Current production and yield: Most of the world's leeks are produced in Europe. California, New Jersey, Michigan, and Virginia are traditional leek growing areas in the United States. Peak availability comes in late winter and in the spring, but leeks are available year-round. Use. The thick, white leaf bases and slightly developed bulb are eaten as a cooked vegetable, in soups, or raw with or without leaves attached. The flavor is mild, sweet, delicate, and distinct from the other members of the onion family. The green leaves are edible, but have a pungent odor and an acrid taste. The leaves are used for flavoring in salads and cooked dishes. Climatic requirements. Leeks can withstand considerable exposure to temperatures below 32F. They grow best in cool to moderate climates. Because bolting (flowering) comes in the first spring after planting, late summer and early fall plantings should be avoided. Propagation and care. Leek may be raised either by direct seeding or by transplanting approximately 3 months after greenhouse or bed planting. From the time of seeding, the plants may occupy the land for 8 to 15 months. For this reason, many growers prefer transplanting. The fertilization program should be adjusted for the area, planting time, soil type, previous crop, and water management. Since the crop has shallow roots, water and fertility management will vary with soil type. Harvest and post-harvest practice. A leek crop seeded in November and transplanted in February can be harvested in June; a crop seeded in March and transplanted in mid-June can be harvested as early as November, although the plants will not reach full size. A crop direct-seeded in April or May can be harvested the following spring. The market demand for leeks is usually greatest in the fall, winter and early spring, and the bulk of the crop is harvested during this period. The largest plants are most susceptible to bolting in late spring or early summer. Before harvest, plants are undercut with a blade attached to a tractor. The blade cuts about 1 to 2 inches beneath the plant base. Uniform undercutting without crop injury is easiest if the plants have been set uniformly at the transplant stage. The large, massive root system of the leek plant at harvest time and the fresh market's demand that 1 inch of clean roots be left on the plant combine to make harvesting difficult. After undercutting, each plant is lifted by hand and detached from the surrounding surface layer of soil with a knife. The soil at the base of the plant holds together in the extensive shallow roots like a mat. Although some soil can be shaken off in the field, the rest must be washed off with a pressurized stream of water. In muddy conditions, harvest is a mess. After the soil has been removed from the roots and an outside layer of the plant stripped clean by hand and washed, the topped or untopped plants are tied into bunches of 2 or 5 plants depending on size and packed into cartons. Some hand stripping is necessary to remove one or more sheaths of soiled or old leaves. Size grading would be a market advantage, but many growers do not go to this trouble. Storage recommendations are 32F at 95 to 100% relative humidity, with an approximate storage life of 2-3 months. For shipping, join bunches at top, center, and bottom with ties. Pest and weed problems. Once a good canopy is developed, weed control should not be a problem. Before then, however, the leek is not very competitive. Direct seeding makes the problem worse. Both nursery and main crop areas should be rotated with non-alliums to guard against diseases and pests. Alliums should not be planted in the same soil or field more than once every 4 or 5 years. Pink root can be a very serious disease. Thrips can also be a very serious insect problem.