

# Chinese Lantern



**Physalis** is a tart berry, somewhat resembling a tomatillo, wrapped in a papery case. This papery wrapping gives it the look of a tiny Chinese lantern — hence the nickname. However, it does not originate in Asia. The fruit is native to South American coun-

tries, including Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Chile.

**Physalis** is a versatile fruit that you can eat raw, cooked, or in the form of jams or jellies. It is a rich source of vitamin C, antioxidants, and other nutrients.

## *Physalis alkekengi*

- **Use:** **Unique seedpods are the stars of this perennial show.** Highly ornamental and striking, to boot, this perennial produces a bounty of small, white flowers in mid-summer. But the real show begins later when charming inflated seedpods appear. Bright orange-to-red pods add a bold touch to containers, borders and presentation gardens. Fast growing and quite unique. Plant Chinese Lantern along walkways or in a decorative container to create a charming display of color and style.
- **Exposure/Soil:** Outdoors, grow in full sun and moist, well-drained soil. It prefers lots of organic matter, such as compost, in the soil for best blooms. Water when the soil starts to dry out. Don't let it dry out. Indoors, as a flowering houseplant, give as much light as you can. It thrives in a sunny window or under bright artificial lights. Water when the soil surface starts to dry.
- **Growth:** Continues to grow up to 2-3' tall and wide.
- **Hardiness:** **Zone** 3-9; Annual /Could be a tender perennial in a mild winter
- **Foliage:** Evergreen if indoors in winter. Oval, green leaves.
- **Flower:** White flowers are pretty, but with its distinctive bright orange papery husks, is a visually striking plant that has long been cultivated for both its ornamental and culinary qualities. As these lanterns dry, they reveal delicious edible red berries inside. Known as Strawberry Groundcherry or Winter Cherry, the berries have a unique tart flavor reminiscent of citrus, complementing both sweet desserts and savory dishes. Beyond its culinary uses, the Chinese Lantern's dramatic appearance makes it a popular choice for dried flower arrangements and festive decorations.