

Onions

Onions are an important crop for gardening year 'round. You can sow onions directly, transplant seedlings, or plant small starter bulbs called "sets".

CULTURE: Light, sandy loam soils high in organic matter. Excellent drainage and full sun are also essential for success. Consistent culture will help prevent bolting. Fertilize close to but not in planting area at time of planting for best results.

DIRECT SOW: In April directly sow "storage" onion seeds $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep and $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart, 2-4 seeds per inch, in rows 12-16" apart. Sprinkle compost over the seeds. Keep soil moist. When plants have sprouted 4 leaves thin to 3-4" apart. Sow "overwintered" onion seeds in mid-August.

SEED and SEEDLINGS: Transplanted seedlings produce uniform plants. Starts are available in tray packs or bunches. In Feb. to mid-March start seeds indoors in flats $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep, 8-12 seeds per inch, in rows 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -3" apart. Do not thin. With scissors give the tops a haircut back to 3" tall every few weeks to promote thick stems and good roots. Indoors, onions need 14-hr. day length. Harden off in cold frame starting in mid-April. Transplant by May 1st.

SETS: Onion sets sprout & establish quickly for use as scallions and they produce bulbs about 3 weeks earlier than from seed. However, sets are notorious for bolting before growing larger. Planting sets in the fall is best, otherwise as early as possible to give them plenty of time to bulb.

BULBING: Size of bulb depends on amount of top growth before bulbing starts. Bulbing stops further top growth. Onions are photoperiodic; bulbing occurs only when the length of day is just right. Day length needed for bulbing differs by variety. For big bulbs do all you can to promote top growth.

HARVEST: As tops begin to dry, turn yellow, and are falling over, withhold watering so the bulbs mature in dry soil. After about half the tops have fallen, push over the remainder, wait about one week and harvest the bulbs. Spread the bulbs out in the sun and cover with a sheet or tarp at night to prevent dew from remoistening them. Cure them for a week or to toughen the skins. Proper curing is essential to promote long storage. If weather is poor at this time, cure on the floor of the garage, barn or house.

STORAGE: Keep onions in mesh sacks so they get good ventilation, and hang sacks where air is dry and cool. Check occasionally and remove any sprouting or rotting onions.