

Harvesting - Onions are finished growing when the tops fall over and dry. Leave the onions in the ground for one to two weeks to develop thick skin. Dry onions completely before storage. Do not dry in the sun. Spanish onions are very susceptible to sunburn; do not expose them to direct sunlight for more than an hour.

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Green Tips

Plant and Grow Guides

Onion Family (GT 110)

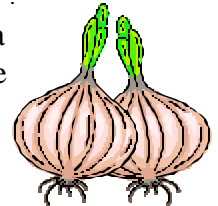
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A Spicy Group to Spice Up Your Life!

Onions and onion relatives are an important part of a great number of cuisines around the world. They are considered to be a staple in most kitchens. There are many types and varieties to grow and all prefer looser soils with adequate moisture and full sun.



Growing Onions

Soil-onions grow best in well-drained and well cultivated sandy loam soil. For clay soils, work in compost to loosen compaction. Heavier soils do not allow the onion bulbs to grow to their potential.

Fertilizer-follow your soil test recommendations. Side dress lightly with a nitrogen fertilizer in June.

Water-to keep soil evenly moist but not wet

Mulch-to keep soil moist and remove competition from weeds.

Plant-onions early to get as much foliage growth as possible.

Onion Terms

Sets: sets are small onions grown from seed the previous year. Each set should be no more than ½ to ¾ inch across. Large sets frequently go to seed and cause the bulb to stop growth. The quality of the bulb is lessened. Place sets 1 - 2 inches deep in rows 12 - 18 inches apart. Sets should be separated in the row 2 inches apart. Cover with one inch of soil.

Seed: onions can be started from seeds but often produce irregular bulbs and are only good for early-maturing varieties.

FAMILY MEMBERS

Onions-onions are one of the most common vegetables grown in home gardens. Onions are classified by their bulb shape which could be flat, round or globe and their color which could be white, yellow or red. They can also be classified by their pungency which are grouped as sweet or pungent and the bulb's response to day length. That can be divided into short, intermediate and long days. In Michigan, the most commonly grown onion is the pungent, yellow globe type. They do best with Michigan's cool conditions. Of the three colors on onions, yellow onions store the best.

Shallots-shallots are multiplier-type onions that divide into a clump of smaller bulbs that resemble tulip bulbs. Many varieties do not set seed. Shallots have a mild, delicate onion flavor and pink outer skin when peeled. Shallots are grown from cloves which are small shallot bulbs. Harvest when the tops die down in summer. Shallots can overwinter in the garden but it is better to remove the clusters of cloves and replant the small cloves in the fall. Shallots can be served cooked or raw.

Leeks-this onion relative is grown for its thick, white stems which have a sweet, mild onion flavor. They do not form bulbs. Leeks can be served raw or cooked. They can be roasted or added to stews or soups. From seed to harvest is 85 - 150 days. It is necessary to start leeks indoors in order to harvest them in the fall. Leeks are biennial but if left until the next year, they produce flowers and seeds and the flavor changes to make them unpleasant. Leeks started from seed take approximately 130 days until harvest.

Bunching onions-are known by a variety of names. They are also called scallions, green onions or spring onions. In England, they are referred to Welsh onions and in south they are called "onions with blades." The top of the onion above ground is eaten and the bulb that develops at ground level is not much thicker than the stem. Most bunching onions have white stems with green, hollow, tube-like leaves. There is also one bunching onion that has dark red to purple stems and green leaves. These onions can be grown from transplants for a crop the same year. Plant them in a furrow 4 - 6 inches deep. As the plants grow, fill the furrow gradually or hill up soil around the plants. This will increase the area of white area on the lower portion of the plant. They are ready to harvest after very little growth. If starting from seeds, they can be started in the spring or in September for an early crop next year.

Chives-chives are grown for their tops. The green blades are cut and chopped. They are served uncooked are sprinkled on top of many dishes and mixed into dips. Chives have a delicate flavor that does not withstand cooking. Chives can be easily integrated into flower gardens and do double duty as ornamental and edible plants There are two kinds of chives. They can be purchased as seeds or transplants. Both kinds of chives are herbaceous perennials.

Onion chives have round, hollow, tapering blades and grow in clumps. They produce purple flowers in late spring or early summer. They have a delicate onion flavor.

Garlic chives have flat, wide leaf blades and grow in clumps. They produce white, showy flowers in late summer or early fall. They have a delicate garlic flavor.

Garlic -common garlic is usually grown from cloves which are sections of the bulb. To grow larger bulbs, start the cloves the fall before and mulch well during the winter. Garlic will not do well if it isn't watered regularly and has weed competition. Remove any flowers if they appear. Elephant garlic is a different species that is grown for its large cloves and mild flavor. Growing conditions for garlic is generally the same as for onions.

