



About Onions

This common vegetable is a close relative to garlic, scallions, leeks, and chives. They are usually served cooked but can also be eaten raw or used to make pickles or chutneys. Be sure to choose a variety of onion that is suited best to your climate. Short day onions are best in southern climates, where they will grow through the cool fall and winter months and bulb production will be triggered when the days get longer in the summer. Long day onions are best for northern climates, where they can enjoy long summer days for them to form bulbs.

When to Plant

Plant onion seeds indoors 8-10 weeks before transplanting them outside just before the average last frost date.

Where to Plant

Onions require an open and sunny site to grow. Start in containers filled nearly to the top with seed starting mix. Keep containers warm and keep starting mix moist. When transplanting, chose a spot with fertile and well-drained soil with a pH of 6-7.5.

How to Plant

Make two furrows, about 1/2" deep, in your seed starting mix. Sprinkle seeds in the furrows and cover them lightly with more soil mix. Once the onion seeds germinate, move the young plants to a sunny south window. When it's time to transplant your seeds, when they reach 4-6" tall, make a furrow in your garden. Tip the mass of onion seedlings out of its container and very gently separate groups of four seedlings at a time into the furrow. These sets should be at least 2-3" apart from one another. Immediately cover with soil.

Caring for Onions

Onions will thrive in moderate temperatures with consistent moisture. It is important not to let your onion plot dry out, as it could stunt growth. Keep weeds hoed when they are small, as onions don't compete well with weeds, and removing larger weeds can disrupt the shallow root systems of onions. In the late summer or early fall, approximately 100-120 days after planting, the leaves on your onion plants will start to flop over. This happens at the "neck" of the onion and signals that the plant has stopped growing and is ready for harvest. Harvest early in the morning when temperatures are mild. Carefully pull or dig onions up from the ground with tops intact. Gently shake the soil from around the bulbs. Onions must first be dried before they can be stored. Spread them out on a clean and dry surface in a well-ventilated location. Cure for 2-3 weeks before cutting tops off to within 1".