



# ONIONS

Onions can be started from bulbs or transplanted. Bulbs tend to stay fresher longer, while plants are more perishable & need to be planted sooner. Onions harvested plants need to be eaten sooner. Onions grown from bulbs have a longer shelf-life.

## VARIETIES

There are red, white, & yellow onion varieties. Yellow are typically sweeter, while white are sharper & tangier. Red onions are the mildest and usually eaten fresh. Green onions are produced from prematurely harvesting onions that have been planted close together.

## PLANTING

Onion bulbs (sets) can be planted from February 15<sup>th</sup> through April 15<sup>th</sup>. The ideal time to plant is in March. Plant bulbs shallow with the tip of the bulb nearing the surface of the soil. If you want green onions, plant bulbs within 2 inches of one another and harvest every other bulb after 3-4 weeks. These immature onions are considered green onions. Let the remaining bulbs continue to grow into 4-5" onions. It is beneficial to fertilize with nitrogen once a month and they should be watered at least once a week. More water typically produces sweeter onions. It is very important to combat weeds. Spraying is very difficult as the tops of onions cannot be sprayed. It is easiest to hand pull weeds and mulching well can help prevent widespread weed growth. If any onions have flowered it indicates that they have "bolted" and should be removed & discarded.

## BED PREPARATION

Onions require plenty of sun & rich, loose soil with very little clay. They prefer a pH level between 6.2 & 6.8. Soil high in phosphorus & potassium works best.

Prepare a bed by tilling the soil at least 6" deep and mixing in a few inches of compost on top. Grey poly-spun fabric can be laid in between rows to prevent weeds while allowing moisture to reach the soil.

Some suggest planting a radish bed nearby to attract maggots away from onion patches.

## HARVESTING

Onions are ready to harvest when the tops are yellow & beginning to bend over. This is usually in July or August or 100-175 days after planting. Carefully dig the mature onions & cut their tops to an inch above the onion. Leave in the sun for a couple of days before storing indoors.

Onion transplants should be planted from March 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>. When planting, bury the white bulb of the onion and leave the greens above ground. Beyond this step, they should be cared for and harvested similarly to bulbs.