

How to grow your onions

Onions are full sun lovers so find the sunniest spot in your garden to grow them. Onions are spaced 4" apart for large onions, or you can space them 2" apart and take every other one out during the growing season and use them for green onions. Make sure to amend the soil with plenty of phosphorus which can come in the form of blood meal or bone meal or any other type of organic phosphorus. Onions are heavy feeders so make sure to add good quality compost and skip adding too much nitrogen - manure.

The process to prepare your planting space would be to:

1. Aerate your space with a spade fork
2. Add your amendments: a balanced vegetable fertilizer and phosphorus
3. Add your 2" of compost over top of the amendments. You could also add worm castings by mixing them together with the compost and spreading it on top of your amendments.
4. Plant your transplants in 1" deep. Any deeper than 1" and the onion may not bulb; plant 4" apart.
5. Make sure to water in well.

Onions have very short roots so you need to be careful to not let them dry out while growing. It shouldn't be a problem in the rainy season, but once the rain stops and the soil starts to dry out you must keep an eye on them. They will begin to put on some size towards the end of their growth. Make sure to keep a thick mulch over top of them to keep them nice and cool during the hottest part of the day and to prevent them from drying out.

Another tip is that since they are heavy feeders, you should feed them every 2 weeks with diluted fish emulsion or kelp tea or compost tea. This will keep them healthy and happy.

The rule for onions is that the longer they are in the ground, the larger they will get. Usually, you stop watering them on Mother's day and harvest on Father's day. Their tops will begin to fall over when they are just about ready. Once the tops flop over you can stop watering them and get ready to harvest. Stop watering them so that the soil will dry and you won't pull up onions that are a muddy mess. These 3 varieties have different harvest times so make sure to keep them in separate planting areas or rows in your garden so that you can make harvesting easier on yourself. Harvest on a dry day. Once you harvest them, lay them out in a **cool dry** place for 2 weeks so that the paper skin can form and they can dry out. Do not wash them. To store them, you can braid them and hang them in a **cool dry** place, or you can clip the tops and put them in a gunny sack or any bag that allows the passage of air thru it. Do not store in the fridge since that is a wet environment and will cause the onions to begin to grow, or worse yet, they will begin to rot.

You can also freeze onions by slicing them and putting them on a cookie sheet one layer thick. Once frozen remove them from the tray and keep them in a freezer bag. They are good for 8 months. Cooked onions will store well in a tightly closed container for 12 months.