



EDIBLE
GARDENING
SERIES



www.windmillgarden.com

16009 60th Street East, Sumner, WA 98390
(253) 863-5843



Onion Planting Guide

CHOOSING

Onions can be purchased as bulbs or “sets”, or as live plants. Here at **Windmill Gardens**, we have a selection of both, this year featuring sets of **White Ebenezer** and **Red Wethersfield**; bundles of **Walla Walla Sweets** and **Red Burgermaster**; and sets of **Dutch Yellow** and **Holland Red** shallots.

PLANTING

Choose a location in full sun, and make sure the soil is free of large rocks or root clumps. The onion bulbs need room to grow unimpeded. Plant just deep enough so the tip of the onion set is exposed. If using live plants, plant at the same depth they were previously planted. Onions have shallow roots, so keep the area free of weeds that would compete for nutrients and water. If you're planting onion sets or setting out plants start by spacing them 4-6 “ apart. For scallions (green onions), leeks, garlic sets (cloves) or bunching onion transplants, space them 2 inches apart.

CULTIVATION

Onions, like most vegetables, thrive in a rich organic soil. Prior to planting, work 2 to 4 inches of compost or well-rotted manure into the soil plus 1 to 2 pounds of a complete fertilizer per 100 square feet. Try to be careful about the fertilizers you use for onions. Onions tend to be more pungent when grown on soils with a high sulfur content. Choose a nitrate-based fertilizer over a sulfate-based fertilizer if you can make that determination. It's difficult to do this with blended fertilizers, but ammonium nitrate would be better to use than ammonium sulfate for side dressing. The fertilizer bag, even on complete fertilizers, 12-24-12 for example, may indicate the components used to formulate the fertilizer. Onions also have a limited root system so, while you don't want to get fertilizer on the plants when you side-dress, you don't want it in the middle of the row either.

Onions need lots of moisture as the bulb initiation process begins, but less when the bulbs are approaching full size. When the tops begin to fall over naturally, it's time to pull the onions up.

ONION HARVEST TIPS

Members of the onion family generally give a very obvious signal when they are ready to harvest. The tops fall over and the tips of the leaves start to turn brown. In addition, the bulbs or buds (in the case of garlic) are full size. Pull the onions, shake off any soil, but do not wash them or pull off any outside wrapper leaves. Store onions in a cool, dry, shaded area to cure for several days or up to 2 weeks if the weather is dry and not too hot. Then clip off the roots and tops leaving about one inch of the stem and brush off any remaining soil.

Store the onions in a very cool place (a basement or even an old refrigerator) trying to keep them between 35 and 55 degrees. The closer to 35 degrees the less chance the onions will sprout. Check your onions occasionally and use any showing signs of sprouting or softening right away. With good storage, your onion crop should last most of the winter. Hot, strong onion varieties tend to keep better than mild varieties such as Walla Walla Sweets.



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