

## ONIONS

Everyone uses onions, either in cooking, salads or fresh eating. Green Onions, or 'bunching onions', are pulled and eaten fresh. Grown from seed, they mature quickly, so more than one crop is possible in the growing season. Dry onions, or Bulb onions are the familiar varieties used for cooking or slicing for sandwiches. These are sold in bunched sets of seedlings, and can be picked up at Oakland in the spring or from catalogs if unusual varieties are your thing.

**Planting:** Onions grow best in well-drained loose fertile soil. Onions require high organic matter. Incorporating composted cow manure into the soil can improve soil drainage and available organic matter. Slightly acid soil is best.

Fertilize with granular 5-10-10 fertilizer at 3.5 lbs. per 100 sq. ft. or an equivalent organic fertilizer. Either spade, fork or plow the fertilizer into the soil. A side dressing of fertilizer may be applied 40-60 days after planting. Place in a continuous band 3 inches from the row and 2 inches deep at same rate. Well prepared soil usually does not require fertilizers.

Onions like cool weather in the early part of their growth, so plant in early spring, 4-6 weeks before the last frost. Plant sets 1-2 inches deep, with rows 12-18 inches apart.

Divide sets into two groups before planting: those smaller in diameter than a dime and those larger.

- Use those larger than a dime for green onions; These sets may form flower stalks and not produce a bulb. Plant one inch apart.
- Use those smaller than a dime for dry bulb production, since there is a slimmer chance of flower stalk growth (known as bolting). Plant these sets two inches apart.

**Cultivation:** Keep beds free of weeds. Onions do not compete well with weeds. Keep the soil loose by frequent cultivation. Never allow onion to go bone dry! Water deeply a couple times a week, possibly more frequently during dry spells. If you ever notice a plant producing a flower stalk, pull at once!

- **Harvest: Green Onions:** All onions go through this stage, it is just a young onion. When in this stage any variety can be pulled and used immediately for fresh eating. There are also varieties specific for green onions.
- **Dry Onions:** Harvest the onions when the tops are dry and the bulbs are mature. (By this time, the tops have fallen over.) On sunny, breezy days, loosen the soil with a fork and allow the bulbs to lay on the soil and dry for a couple of days.  
Curing: After drying outside, move the bulbs inside a garage for a couple of weeks to continue the drying process.

**Storage:** Sack in mesh bags or tie in bunches and store in a cool DRY, well ventilated place.