

REMOVE THESE PLANTS FROM THE BOX IMMEDIATELY! DO NOT PUT IN SOIL OR WATER BEFORE PLANTING. KEEP COOL AND DRY UNTIL PLANTING TIME.

CARING INSTRUCTIONS: You have received live plants that should be planted as soon as possible. The plants may appear dry from shipping but this is normal, as they are dormant. Don't worry if you cannot plant immediately, even if the roots and tops begin to dry out. The onion is a member of the lily family and as such, will live off the bulb for approximately three weeks. Ideally, however, we recommend planting within one week.

PREPARING THE SOIL: To grow big and mild, onions need highly fertile soil and at least an inch of rain or irrigation weekly. Avoid growing onions adjacent to other crops that will shade them. Onions need all the sun they can get, and are best grown in raised beds at least 4" high and 20" wide. If your soil fertility is low, supplement with a good compost or balanced organic fertilizer.

PLANTING: Set plants out approximately 1" deep and 4" apart in rows 12-18" apart. On the raised bed, set two rows on each bed, 4" in from the side of the row. The first thing the onion will do after planting is establish new roots. Should you want to harvest some of the crop during the growing season as green onions, space plants as close as 2" apart. Pull every other onion during the growing season, leaving some to mature into larger bulbs.

WATERING: Water the transplants immediately after planting. Because of the shallow root system, onions require frequent irrigation. We recommend drip irrigation rather than overhead or sprinkler irrigation, which may encourage foliage diseases. If the foliage has an unhealthy yellowish tint, the plants are being over-irrigated. Soil will be overly dry around an under-watered crop and may become cracked. Onions generally require ample irrigation during a growing season and the closer to harvest, the greater the need for water. If an onion fails to receive enough water, it will not make a large bulb. Consistent moisture is most important during the active growing stage. If it does not rain, provide 1" of irrigation weekly. When the necks begin to fall over, and as the onions mature, watering should be discontinued and the soil allowed to dry.

DISEASES, INSECTS, AND WEEDS: Spacing plants the recommended distance apart helps provide adequate air circulation, which reduces the time leaves are wet and hence, disease.

Insects causing the most damage are onion thrips. They are light-brown in color and approximately 1mm long. They feed by rasping the surface of the leaves and sucking the liberated juices, causing deformed plants with silvery blotches. Thrips overwinter in weeds, so reduce pest populations by keeping the garden or field clean. Combat serious infestations with Neem Oil.

Weed control is especially important early in the onion growing process. Keep onions well weeded with shallow cultivation, being careful not to damage the onion bulbs when cultivating. Keep soil loose so onions can expand easily, but avoid allowing soil to cover plants or expanding bulbs since it will prevent the onion from forming its natural bulb. A light organic mulch will help control weeds and preserve moisture; pull the soil back from bulbs when they begin to bulb.

HARVEST AND STORAGE: Stop fertilizing within 3 weeks of harvest, when the necks begin to soften. Onion tops turn yellow and fall over when mature. Bending the tops over early will decrease bulb size. Pull the onions out of the ground and let them dry in the sun for two days. Lay the tops of one row of bulbs over the bulbs of another to prevent sunscald. When onions are dry, clip roots and cut back tops to one inch or braid uncut tops together and hang onions in an airy spot. The best way to store onions is in a mesh bag or shallow boxes at near freezing and 65-70% relative humidity. As a general rule, the sweeter the onion, the higher the water content, and therefore the shorter the shelf life. A more pungent onion will store longer, so eat the sweet varieties first and save the more pungent onions for storage. Every few weeks, stored onions should be sorted to eliminate any which may have begun to decay.