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Onions, Scallions, Shallots

The onion family is very cold tolerant, and planting as early as mid-April is OK. Early planting allows time for good growth before the bulbs start to form, so you'll get larger bulbs.

Types of Onions:

Regular onions are sold as small bulbs called 'sets'. A set is a small, dormant onion, and there are about 150 sets per pound. Plant them just deep enough so the tip is level with the soil surface. Space them 2"-4" apart, either in rows or in a bed.

Scallions are just this same onion, harvested and used when the bulbs are small. If you planted the sets 2" apart, you can summer harvest every other plant for use as Scallions. The remaining plants will be 4" apart and left to grow larger bulbs.

Shallots are a type of mild onion, with the bulbs growing in clusters. They don't like hot weather, so early season planting is important. They are quick to mature.

Sweet Onions are specific varieties that have milder flavor. They don't store well. We sell these as 'live sets'. The live sets should be planted soon after you buy them. Plant them 4" apart. If you plan on a summer harvest of these, as scallions, plant them 2" apart and pull every other plant in the summer.

Plant onions shallow. The roots grow near the surface. When you cultivate your garden, go easy around the onions or you'll be cutting roots.

After they start to grow, you can mulch them to save moisture and reduce weeds, and to protect the bulbs from sunburn. But, as the bulbs get large late in the summer, pull the mulch back a bit so the bulbs will mature.

Scallions and Sweet Onions should be harvested and used right away, or stored green in a refrigerator.

Onions and Shallots are usually stored after harvest. To get the best storage life:

They are ready for harvest when the green tops fall over, bending at the neck just above the bulb.

Pull or dig them during dry weather. Leave them outside for a few days, roots and leaves still attached. Protect them rain, and from direct sun so the bulb won't sunburn. This will help to dry and cure the bulb. They are dry when the neck (where the leaves emerge from the bulb) is dry.

Once the bulbs are cured, the leaves and roots can be removed. They can be stored for several months in a dry and cool place. Keep them from being stacked too deeply, so they can get air—hanging mesh bags work well for this.

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