

Planting Onions



Onions start planting from end Sept to mid Oct or end Feb into March, Shallots are the same in autumn but spring planting from late Jan thru February

- Of all the vegetables we grow, it is the onion that boasts the oldest pedigree. Seeds have been found in the tombs of ancient Egyptians & was one of the first plants to be domesticated by man. Assuming you can give them a place on the plot that's bathed in sunshine & enjoys a free-draining fertile soil, onions will do their thing for you too.
- Onions can be raised from seed but a far easier alternative is to start them off from miniature 'sets'. Sets are simply immature onions that have been started off commercially then dried to suspend growth. The sets increase in size & each forms one full-sized bulb when ready to harvest,
- Spring planted onions will put down roots & start growth as soon as the soil starts to warm & be ready approx a full month later than Autumn-planted sets, which will start growing roots then go dormant in the cold & just tick over quietly for winter ready to take off that much earlier in spring .(which can yield their haul by early summer).
- Onion sets follow on from summer crops. If you have grown potatoes this season then plant them there, as the soil will have been well dug for this crop & will, hopefully, be reasonably free of weeds. Rake in some general purpose fertiliser about a week before plating to give the soil a boost of nutrients; Growmore or blood, fish & bone is fine.
- Onions prefer quite a firm soil, So just before planting, shuffle up & down the onion bed, taking baby steps to push down the soil.
- Plant sets about 2cm (1in) deep so that just about quarter of each set pokes proud of ground level. Space each one 7-10cm (3-4in) apart in rows 30cm (12in) distant. Birds have a habit of mistaking the papery tips as tasty morsels, pulling up the sets, so just push them back in so they can root. Once your sets are in situ keep the ground clean by hand pulling weeds so as not to damage or uproot the baby onions.
- To harvest, let the leaves turn brown & flop, lift out the bulbs & put them somewhere to dry for several weeks
- 16 plants could be grown in a square metre. This helps you calculate how much space you'll need, and the yield you can expect.