

Onions and Garlic



Onions are members of the **Liliaceae** or Lily family. Varieties of this cool season vegetable can be grown from seeds, **sets**, or transplants. A young onion forms a top and then develops a **bulb**. The number and size of the leaves on top determine the size of the onion. There is one ring of onion for each leaf; a large leaf will create a large ring. Onions come in 3 bulb colors – white, yellow and red.

Nutritional Components of Onions

Carbohydrates
Water
The mineral potassium
Vitamins C, B6 (pyridoxine), and B9 (folate)

There are 2 main classes of onions: **long-day** and **short-day**. The long-day varieties are better suited for northern states while the short-day varieties grow well in the south. The short-day onion develops its bulb earlier in the year when there are about 12 hours of sunlight each day.

We prefer to plant seedlings (called onion sets) in January after preparing the soil by adding rock phosphate and worm castings. The seedlings should be planted 1 inch deep and about 4 inches apart. Another option is to plant the seedlings closer together then harvest every other onion about 8 to 10 weeks after planting them. These onions can be used as 'green onions'. The remaining onions are allowed to continue to grow.

In our garden we plant **Texas 1015Y** super sweet onion sets about January 15th. We harvest these onions about May 15th. The **1015Y onion** became the state vegetable of Texas in 1997

They should be fertilized with an organic fertilizer every 2 to 3 weeks until about 1 month before harvesting. Keep them evenly moist during the growing season. Extra water is needed as harvest time approaches. When the tops fall over in mid to late May, the onions are ready to harvest. The roots of the onion should be clipped and the top cut back to within 1 inch of the bulb. Store them in a cool, dry location.

Onions are a good source of fiber and are fat-free and low in calories. The average American eats 20 pounds of onions each year.

Why do you think these onions are called "1015"? _____

What is an onion set? _____

Garlic is also in the Lily family and forms bulbs underground. The bulbs are divided into sections called **cloves**. Cloves are used to plant a new crop of garlic. Garlic needs well-drained soil, organic fertilizer with some extra phosphorus added to it, sun, and a good layer of mulch to keep the roots cool. The cloves are planted with their pointed sides facing up and 6 inches apart. The cloves should be lightly covered with soil. Garlic is planted in the fall and harvested at the end of May.



We plant garlic that does not need a long time of temperatures below 45 degrees F. to form bulbs. The garlic we plant is generally a soft-neck variety. When the garlic plant is ready for harvest the stems or necks fall over. The stems or necks are soft. After the bulbs are harvested they need to be dried or cured in a cool place with good air circulation. After they are cured they may be stored in a paper bag in the refrigerator.