

# How to Grow Your Own Onions

Onions are a hugely popular vegetable and have many uses in the kitchen. They are also easy to grow and great for beginners. Onions grow best in an open, sunny site with plenty of space, but you can plant a few in deep containers.

Onions are usually grown from small, immature bulbs known as sets. You can also grow them from seeds. This method is cheaper, but the plants take longer to establish and can have varied results.

## Sowing

- Prepare the ground by digging over the soil and raking smooth. Do not plant onions in manured soil or the bulbs may rot
- Plant sets 10cm apart in rows 30cm apart. Gently push the set into the soil so just the tip is showing. Firm the soil in around them
- Protect sets from the birds with netting
- If growing onions from seed, sow outside in the soil 13mm deep in rows 20cm apart

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Sow		•	•									
Harvest							•	•	•			

## How to look after me

**Soil:** Light and well-drained

**Position:** Sunny and very open

**Location:** Outdoors

## Growing

- Onions grown from seed will need thinning out. This involves removing some seedlings to give plants plenty of space to develop strong growth
- First remove any weak seedlings. Spread the remaining ones initially to 5cm apart, then later to 10cm apart
- Keep the soil clear of weeds by hoeing or hand-pulling. This is important because onions are shallow-rooted
- Water the onions in dry conditions and feed occasionally with a general purpose fertiliser
- In June, feed lightly with a sulphate of potash fertiliser to help ripen the bulbs
- Stop all watering and feeding once the onions have swollen and remove any mulch or mounds of soil to expose the bulb to sunlight
- Remove any flower spikes as soon as you see them to prevent bolting



# How to Grow Your Own Onions



## Harvesting

- Onions should be ready for harvesting from August to September
- The foliage will turn yellow and flop over when the onion is mature. Once this happens, leave the bulbs for two weeks
- Choose a dry day and gently lift with a fork
- If you wish to store the onions, dry them out completely first
- Spread out the bulbs on sacking or in trays, outside or indoors if it is wet and leave for 7 to 21 days, depending on their size
- Any soft or spotted bulbs should be used in the kitchen as soon as possible, but the others may be stored. You can either hang them in nets or plait them together using the foliage
- Store the bulbs in a cool, dry place with good light. In these conditions they should keep for between three to six months

### Did You Know?

Onions contain a chemical irritant that makes you cry when you chop them. Stop the tear-jerking by refrigerating onions before you cut them to reduce how much is released

## David's Top Tip

Stop onions from bolting (running to seed) by reducing the 'stress' the plant is under. Plants become stressed when conditions change dramatically, so keep well-watered in hot weather

