

# Onions



Plant group: Onions (Alliums)

Sow Directly: March – April (seeds or sets)

Sow Directly: September – October (overwinter varieties)

Harvest: May - October

## Choosing Seed

Use organic seed/sets where possible. Good sources are:

The Reading Food Growing Network ([www.readingfoodgrowingnetwork.org.uk](http://www.readingfoodgrowingnetwork.org.uk)) seed swap events,

The Organic Gardening Catalogue ([www.organiccatalogue.com](http://www.organiccatalogue.com)) ,

or the Seed Co-operative ([www.seedcooperative.org.uk](http://www.seedcooperative.org.uk)).

Try these varieties: Sturon, Stuttgart for spring planting. Radar for overwintering

## Sowing and Planting

Onions can be grown from seed or from baby onions known as sets. Seeds are a cheaper option if you have the space for a large crop, but onion sets are easier to grow. Overwintering sets can be planted in the Autumn, otherwise sow seeds or plant sets in the spring.

**Onion sets** should be planted so that the pointed tip is just below the soil surface, 15cm to 20cm apart, in rows 20cms apart. If you are happy with smaller onions, they can be planted a bit closer together.

**Seeds** should be sown thinly 1cm deep in lines 15- 20 cms apart. When seedlings appear, they can be thinned out by removing the weaker plants.

You might wish to cover the onions with fleece or fine mesh (preferably held up by canes or a frame) to prevent birds from pulling up the emerging plants, and to prevent damage by allium leaf miner.

Onions like a sunny, well drained position. Mulching will help to preserve moisture and keep the weeds down. If the weather is dry, water occasionally with a general purpose organic liquid fertiliser.

## Harvesting

Onions can be harvested when the leaves start to go yellow and fall over. Remove flower spikes as they appear. Lift the onions as required and dry in the sun for a few days if they are to be stored, otherwise use straight away.

## Storing

Maincrop onions will keep for up to 6 months in a light place. To take up less space, they can be stored in pairs of tight knotted between each bulb and hung up. Make sure that onions are not going soft before you store them. Cut out and discard the soft part and use these onions straight away. Overwintered onions do not store as well, so pull them up when you are going to use them.

## Growing in Containers

Onions are best grown in open ground, but can be grown in smaller numbers in large deep containers or raised beds.