

GROWING ONION SETS In Houston

Onions are one of the most popular vegetables in the home garden. They can be grown for green onions and dry bulbs.

Onions are easy to grow. They perform best in well-drained, slightly acidic, fertile soils in full sun. Heavy soils can be improved by incorporating organic matter, such as compost, into the soil. Onions require higher fertility levels than most other vegetables. Apply 1 to 2 pounds of an all-purpose garden fertilizer, such as MicroLife 6-2-4, per 100 square feet and till into the soil prior to planting. Four to five weeks after planting, side dress with additional fertilizer. Sprinkle 1 pound of an all-purpose garden fertilizer per 100 feet of row. Place the fertilizer in a narrow band about 2 to 3 inches from the base of the onion plants.

Onion Sets

Sets are small onion bulbs that were grown the previous year, harvested, stored through winter, then distributed to garden centers in early spring. Specific onion varieties are usually not available. They are sold simply as red, white or yellow onion sets. Since the variety is unknown, the flavor, use, and keeping quality of onions grown from sets varies considerably. Before planting sets, separate the bulbs into two size groups -- those smaller than a nickel in diameter and those larger than a nickel. The larger sets often bolt (produce a flower stalk) and don't produce good-sized bulbs. Use the larger sets for green onions. The smaller sets can be allowed to develop into mature onions.

Plant sets in October as soon as the ground can be worked. Sets should be planted at a depth of 1 to 1 1/2 inches in rows 12 to 15 inches apart. For dry onions, plant the sets 2 to 3 inches apart. Sets grown for green onions can be planted closer together.

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