

ONIONS, SHALLOTS, GARLIC

Care of your onions and shallot sets

We check all onion and shallot sets before bagging them but it is inevitable that bruised ones get into the bags. Empty them into a seed tray after purchase. Store them in a light, dry and airy place and keep checking and removing any that look damaged or soft until you are ready to plant them out.

ONIONS and SHALLOTS – general notes on planting

Grow in a sunny sheltered site in soil that is moisture retentive but has good drainage. Avoid planting on freshly manured ground because this is said to lead to rotting. Avoid growing onions and shallots in the same site every year. A few weeks before planting rake the top few centimetres of soil into a fine tilth, then make it firm and level and incorporate a general fertiliser. Keep bed well weeded. Tim Foster warns that for every day of weed competition, your yields will reduce by 4 %.

ONION SETS

Spring sets are planted direct in the prepared bed from March to April; Autumn planted sets from September to October.

Space the sets 10 cm apart (4 inches) in rows 25 cms (10 inches) apart. Do not push the sets in as this can damage the base, especially on heavy soils. Use a trowel to plant them out, tucking them into the soil with the tip just showing. Then cover the newly planted bed with a thin layer of organic matter that just hides the tips. Should be ready by July/ August.

SHALLOTS - The Shop only supplies these in SPRING

Shallots are easily grown and tend to keep better than onions. One bulb makes a clump of at least 6 new bulbs. Plant Golden Gourmet mid February to mid March . Plant Red Sun a bit later – end of March say Kings Seeds our supplier. If these are planted too early and we get a cold spell they can bolt. The flower stalk will develop because the plant thinks winter is on the way.

Space the bulbs 15 cm (6 inches) apart, with 25 – 30 cm (10 – 12 inches) between rows. Follow advice for onions so as not to damage the bases as you plant them. Should be ready mid July..

GARLIC

Garlic grows best in a sunny site in light, well-drained soil . Spring planted garlic needs to be in before the end of February . Winter garlic is planted early to mid October. Garlic needs 1 to 2 months of low temperature to initiate bulb development. Split the 'head' of garlic into cloves and plant these individually. Be warned – cloves vary hugely in size. Make a hole or part the soil with a trowel, about 2" deep, drop in the clove, pointy end up and flat base down. Make sure the tip is about 1 inch under the surface. Space them 15cm (6 inch) apart with 30 cm between rows. They need very little after care, just nip off the flower head if it appears (more likely with hard neck garlic). Make sure to water as they grow , especially if we have a dry spring. A handy hint from Tim Foster's book 'Good Earth Gardening' on planting out the smaller cloves from the middle of the head is to plant them in a row just 2.5 cm (1")apart, in row s 15 cm (6 ") apart . Harvest in May, like a garlic spring onion.