

10 Steps to Growing Your Own Onions & Shallots



- Step 1: Unpack your sets on arrival and store them in a light, cool place until it's time for planting (October-April – please check the packet).
- Step 2: Onions like a sunny, sheltered site in well-drained soil. Prepare your plot by digging over the soil with a fork to break up and large clumps and remove any weeds. Shallots will grow perfectly happily in a window box or a container on a sunny patio. Plant one bulb to a 15cm (6") pot and keep the compost moist.
- Step 3: Plant the sets 10cm apart in rows that are 30cm apart from October to mid-April (dependant on variety – check the packet for details). Gently push the sets into the ground and firm the soil around them, so that just the tips are showing above the soil.
- Step 4: Water your sets if the weather is dry and occasionally feed with a liquid fertiliser.
- Step 5: A light feed of high potassium fertiliser in June will help to ripen the bulbs for storage.
- Step 6: Stop watering and feeding once your onions have begun to gain some colour on the top. Remove any mulch or soil to expose the bulb to the sun.
- Step 7: Onions can be harvested when the foliage turns yellow and starts to topple over.
- Step 8: Leave them in the ground for 2-3 weeks and then carefully lift them with a garden fork.
- Step 9: If you wish to store your harvest, the bulbs must be firm and disease-free, so inspect them carefully. Dry the bulbs for 2-3 weeks, either laid out in the sun or in a shed if the weather is wet. They can be stored once the skins and necks are dry – a dry, unheated garage or basement is a good choice – as long as the temperature doesn't drop below freezing.
- Step 10: Use any damaged onions or shallots asap as they won't store. Why not make a delicious onion jam or simply chop and freeze them for later?