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# virginia home food production



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## ONIONS

DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE

Reprinted January 1981

BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA MH 411

### ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

**LIGHT:** sunny, (green onions tolerate partial shade)

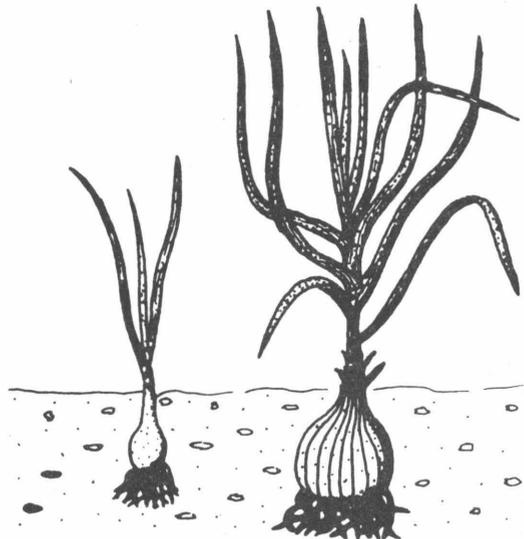
**SOIL:** well-drained loam

**FERTILITY:** medium-rich

**pH:** 5.5-7.0

**TEMPERATURES:** cool (45-60°F) during development  
medium hot (60-75°F) during bulbing and curing.

**MOISTURE:** moist, but not waterlogged.



**HARDINESS:** green or bunching - hardy biennials

Egyptian or Perennial Tree and multiplier - hardy perennials

### FERTILIZER NEEDS:

Medium feeder, use starter solution for transplants, sidedress one to two weeks after bulb enlargement begins (1½ oz. (33-0-0) per 10 foot of row).

### CULTURAL PRACTICES:

The two main types of onions are American (pungent) and foreign (mild). Each has three distinct colors - yellow, white, and red. In general, the American onion produces bulbs of smaller size, denser texture, stronger flavor, and better keeping quality.

### CULTURE

#### PLANTING:

Use sets, seeds, or transplants in spring for green or bunching onions, seeds may be started indoors eight weeks before setting out; use sets in the fall for perennial or multiplier types of onions.

**SPACING:** 1-6" x 12-24", (plant close, then thin, using green onions)

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For green or bunching onions, use sets, seeds, or transplants in spring; use Egyptian or Perennial Tree and the Yellow Multiplier or potato onion sets in fall.

Onions that keep well in storage are yellow, red, and white globe varieties.

Plant sets in spring. Set one to two inches apart and one to two inches deep in the row. Thin to four inches apart and eat the thinned plants as green onions. Avoid sets more than an inch in diameter, because they are likely to produce seed stalks. Too early planting and exposure to cold temperatures also cause seed stalk development. Large-sized sets tend to go to seed easier.

Egyptian Tree or Multiplier onions should be set in late October or early November. Plant four inches apart in rows one to two feet apart. (Distance between rows is determined by available space and cultivating equipment.)

Bulbs compete poorly with weeds due to shallow root systems. Shallow cultivation is necessary. Do not hill up soil on onions as this can encourage stem rot. Insure ample moisture especially after bulbs begin enlargement.

Onions should be harvested when about two-thirds of the tops have fallen over. Careful handling to avoid bruising helps control storage rots. Onions may be pulled and left in the field for three to seven days with the tops attached, or cured in an attic for this same length of time. Cover bulbs with their tops to avoid sunscald. Tops may be left on or cut off. A small quantity of onions may be hung up to dry. Leave about three-fourth inch of the top when storing.

Prepared by: P.D. Relf, B. Adler,  
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## COMMON PROBLEMS

DISEASES: neck or stem rot, bulb rot

INSECTS: thrips, onion root  
maggots

CULTURAL: bulb rot (from bruising,  
insufficient drying)

## NUTRITIONAL VALUE

	<u>Grams</u>	<u>Calories</u>
Green onions,		
2 medium or		
6 small	30	14
Mature onions,		
1 cup sliced	115	45

	<u>% U.S. RDA</u>	
	<u>Vitamin A</u>	<u>Vitamin C</u>
Green	-	10
Mature	-	20

## HARVESTING AND STORAGE

DAYS TO MATURITY: 100-120  
(mature bulbs)

HARVEST: green onions when tops are 6 inches tall, bulbs after half or more of the tops are fallen over. Do not wait too long after this occurs. Allow for thorough drying before storage.

APPROXIMATE YIELDS: (per 10 foot  
row) 10-15 lbs.

AMOUNT TO RAISE PER PERSON: 10-15  
lbs.

STORAGE: cool (32°F), dry (65-70%  
RH) conditions; 6-7 months

PRESERVATION: stored dry, or may be  
pickled and canned.  
Freeze well if chopped  
and covered with water.