

When to harvest onions and how to cure them

Are you tired of constantly having to buy onions at the store, only to have them go bad after just a few days? If so, it might be time to try harvesting and curing your own onions at home. Not only will this give you the opportunity to enjoy fresher, more flavorful onions, but it will also allow you to save money and reduce food waste by extending the shelf life of your onions.

Harvesting and curing your own onions is actually quite easy and can be a fun and rewarding experience for home gardeners. All you need is a patch of soil, some seeds or seedlings, and a little bit of patience. Once your onions are ready to be harvested, the curing process is simple: just brush off any excess dirt, leave them in a warm, dry place for about a week to 10 days, and turn them occasionally for even curing. After curing, you can store your onions in a cool, dry place where they will last for several months.

Not only will harvesting and curing your own onions give you a sense of accomplishment, but it will also allow you to enjoy the benefits of homegrown produce. Homegrown onions tend to be more flavorful and nutritious than store-bought onions, and you can choose from a wide variety of onion varieties to find the perfect kind for your taste and cooking needs.

So, why not give it a try? With a little bit of effort and some careful attention, you can enjoy homegrown onions all year round. Your taste buds (and your wallet) will thank you!

When to harvest onions

Like many other vegetables, [onions are edible at most stages of growth](#). The caveat to pulling onions before the desired harvest time is that they will be small and lack flavor in comparison to waiting for your harvest. However, onions must be fully ready for harvest in order to be cured.

When the tops of the onion plants turn yellow and fall over, it's a good indication that your onions are ready to be harvested. At this point, the onions should have developed to a larger size and their skin should be dry and papery. Although, most onion varieties are [best harvested in the late summer](#). It is best to avoid harvesting onions in wet or frosted weather, as this can increase damage and compromise your onion's ability to cure and last.

However, if you notice your [onion plant has begun to grow flowers](#)—also known as bolting—the onions may have matured past the point of curability. These are indications that the onion is ready to be harvested and eaten, but at this point, the onion is losing its shelf-life and will be less receptive to curing and storing.

But did you know that onions can also be harvested earlier for a sweeter, more tender taste? If you're feeling adventurous and want to try something different, you can harvest your onions a bit earlier than usual. Check your onion plants after about 2 months after planting. Just make sure

that the bulbs are large enough and that the skin is starting to dry out. Harvesting onions on the earlier side will give them the sweetness you're looking for!

When it comes to harvesting onions, the most important thing is to keep an eye on the plants and pay attention to their development. With a little bit of patience and some careful observation, you'll be able to harvest the perfect onions every time!

How to harvest onions

Harvesting onions is a fun and rewarding experience for home gardeners, especially when you see all of your hard work paying off in the form of plump, juicy onions! To carefully lift the onions out of the ground, you'll want to use a garden fork or trowel. This will avoid unnecessary damage to your onion plants, as these tools are specially made to handle your plants with care. Gently loosen the soil around the bulbs and lift them out, being careful not to damage them.

It's important to be gentle when harvesting onions, as rough handling can damage the bulbs and shorten their shelf life. Once you've carefully lifted the onions out of the ground, it's a good idea to leave them in the sun for a few hours to dry off. This will help to ensure that they are ready for curing.

[Look out for signs of disease](#) on your bulb, onion, or stem to avoid illness from consumption. Damaged bulbs, bruised bulbs, green necks, and purple, brown, or gray mold are just a few signs to look out for. [Common onion plant diseases](#) include downy mildew, neck rot, purple blotch, and onion smut.

Here are some [prevention methods](#):

- Downy mildew and purple blotch are best prevented by crop rotation and fungicides.
- Neck rot is best prevented by planting healthy bulbs that are free of damage and close plant spacing.
- Onion smut is best prevented by planting onions in sets rather than from seed.

How to cure onions

Congratulations on a successful onion harvest! Now it's time to cure your homegrown onions so that they'll last for several months. Curing is an important step in the process, as it helps to dry out the bulbs and toughen up their skin, which in turn helps to extend their shelf life.

To cure onions, you'll want to find a warm (but not hot), dry place with good air circulation. Onion tips [cure best in temperatures around 75 degrees Fahrenheit with a cool breeze](#). Some people

like to use a garage or shed, while others prefer to cure their onions outdoors in a sunny spot. Just make sure that the area is well-ventilated and free from moisture, as excess moisture can lead to rot.

Once you've found the perfect spot, lay out your onions in a single layer, taking care not to overlap them. Leave them there for about a week to 10 days, turning them occasionally to ensure that they cure evenly. Remember that you'll know that your onions are properly cured when their skin is dry and papery, the tops and roots are dry, and they feel firm to the touch.

After they have cured, cut off the tops with scissors, leaving about an inch of stem. Cured onions should always be stored in a cool, dry place. For most effective storage that will keep them edible for as long as possible, keep onions stored indoors and in a protected yet breathable bag, container, or basket.

It is important to look out for signs of [bacterial soft rot](#) in stored onions. This disease makes stored onions unsafe to eat. Common signs include yellow, watery tissue and often an unpleasant smell. If you notice any signs of bacterial soft rot, it is important to know that this disease can spread to surrounding onions in storage.

This is best prevented by ensuring your storage is cool and dry and that your stored bulbs are not exposed to moisture. It's also important to remember to avoid storing your onions with your potatoes. Potatoes produce moisture that can compromise your onions. On the other hand, onions secrete ethylene gas which can make your potatoes go bad quickly.

Overall, with proper curing, care, and observation, your onions should last for several months, ready to be used in all of your favorite recipes!

FAQs About Harvesting Onions

Still have wonderings about harvesting and curing your homegrown onions? Check out these frequently asked questions:

Can you eat onions straight from the garden?

1. Yes, onions can be eaten straight from the garden. They can be harvested at most stages of growth, but waiting for the onion to grow its largest will produce the most flavor. However, they will taste the best and have the longest shelf life if they are properly cured before storage.

How long can you leave onions in the ground?

2. Onions can be left in the ground until the tops have fallen over and the bulbs have started to dry out, which usually happens about two to three months after planting. If you

leave them for too long, like any product plant, they will begin to rot. It's also important to remember that once an onion bolts, it is no longer ideal for curing.

What happens if you don't harvest onions?

3. If you don't harvest onions, they will continue to grow and eventually produce seeds. While you can still eat the onions at this point, they may not be as flavorful as they would be if harvested at the proper time. If you leave them for too long, you will begin to notice signs of rotting.

Do you harvest onions before they flower?

4. Yes, onions are typically harvested before they flower. If you wait until the onions have flowered, the bulbs may be too mature and may not store as well. Onions that have flowered may also lack in flavor and texture.

Do you need to dry onions after harvesting?

5. Yes, it's a good idea to dry onions after harvesting to help extend their shelf life. You do not have to dry your onions if you plan to eat them right away, although it is a good idea to cure them anyway to prevent your onions from going bad. Produce—especially homegrown—only stays fresh for so long!

How many onions do you get from one plant?

6. The number of onions that you get from one plant will depend on the variety of onions that you are growing and the growing conditions. On average, you can expect to get about 4-6 bulbs per plant.

Conclusion

Onions are a primary vegetable in home gardens due to their versatility in the kitchen, ease of growth, and ability to be cured to last. Your homegrown onions are the perfect healthy yet flavorful addition to a family recipe or can be the star of the show in a dish that calls for a savory palate.

So, make the most of your onion crop! Proper harvesting and curing can help extend the shelf life of your onions, so it's definitely worth taking the time to do it right.

Key signs that your onions are ready to be harvested include when the tops of your plants have fallen over and the bulbs have started to dry out. Depending on the variety of onions you are growing, they are usually ready to harvest about two to three months after planting.

Onions can also be harvested earlier for a sweeter, more tender taste, but make sure the bulbs are large enough and the skin is starting to dry out.

Once your onions are ready to be harvested, it's important to cure them properly to help them last longer. To cure onions, here are the general steps to remember: after pulling your onions, be sure to remove any excess dirt. Then, leave them in a warm, dry place for about a week or up to 10 days. Make sure to turn your onions occasionally so that they all cure evenly.

After they have cured, you can use scissors to cut off the tops, leaving about an inch of stem. Be sure to store them in a cool, dry place. Moisture will combat the curing process and will make your onions go bad. Remember to store your onions in a separate space, away from your potatoes. Storage options for your onions may include a mesh bag or hung in a pantry or basement.

To avoid diseases, look out for damaged or bruised bulbs, green necks, and purple, brown, or gray mold.

There you have it! Growing your onions at home in your backyard garden can provide a fruitful crop that lasts. Proper harvesting, curing, and storing techniques are a must to make homegrown onions last.

Sources:

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