

## HOW TO GROW ONIONS

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the sun or open air until all the tops are dead they should be carefully taken to a convenient shade, barn or under trees and all the tops removed. It may require a week or two for the tops to become sufficiently dry for removal. They should not be exposed to a hot sun too long nor should they be neglected and left in the ground too long; if it should rain on them after maturing it will cause them to start new growth and ruin the crop for marketing. If they are to be kept any length of time they should be spread out six or eight inches deep on shelves made of 1x4 inch on edge and have plenty of air. Handle them as though they were ripe peaches and you will receive your reward on sales day.

### MARKETING

You may have had perfect success from start to finish and yet fail in cashing them, and all has failed. I might give the addresses of a few commission men with whom I have dealt with satisfaction, but I do not know what time they will quit that business, but when that time arrives they generally forget to whom to make returns and so pocket receipts. I have sent five barrels of as fine Bermuda onions as was ever shipped to a firm in Dallas and never received a nickel for them. He gave good reference; all spoke well of him, but on following it up I found that my shipment was near the time he was going to retire and he did not care for his reputation. I presume he went into the banking business. I did make good cash sales by handing out samples to local dealers and private families. No doubt there are commission men in the cities of the north who are not yet ready to retire, but I don't know. For shipments by rail Bermuda onions should be carefully packed in barrels well coopered and well ventilated by boring or cutting holes in the bottom and sides, then securely covered with gunny sacks, "any old thing" on top of onions to protect from bruising will do. They may thus be safely shipped by freight. Creole onions can be safely shipped in sacks. The question of marketing is a great question, but get the cash on track if you can. The present outlook is fair for your people to ship by car lots which will give them a much larger net profit. The acreage which they propose to plant should at least be doubled. It will give much larger returns.

### STRAGGLING NOTES

While it seems to the inexperienced a big job to drop and place the young onions it may be done very rapidly. It requires quick motion and nimble fingers. Take as many onions as convenient to carry, keep them wet in about a half inch of water, now take a small hand full in the left hand, fingering them out one at a time, placing it in a position with the right hand. An active brain and experience will do more for the beginner than five pages of directions.

It requires about two or two and a half pounds of good seed per acre for raising the young plants and about four or five when sown in the field.

I fertilize with wood ashes, cottonseed meal or commercial fertilizer. Make a light furrow with an eight inch sweep, then with your seed drill run your fertilizer in this furrow; follow this with a bull tongue to mix it; then after a week or two harrow lengthwise the rows to prevent weeds; then with the sled or garden plow open a furrow and set onions at once with all available help. When barnyard manure is used it should be very fine, but it could scarcely be run through a seed drill.

The field for the onions should be thoroughly pulverized and all stones, weeds, roots and trash of every kind should be cleaned off even if it is necessary to use a hand rake. This will not be lost labor, for you can use the same land for onions year after year to good advantage and in doing so the land should be planted to cow peas as

soon as the onions are off. It would be advisable to roll the land before planting the onions.

Onions need to be kept clean of weeds and grass and therefore need a good deal of cultivation, as the ground should never be allowed to bake in the least and you must keep ahead of crab grass or you are its slave

One of the largest and most successful onion growers in Texas is T. C. Nye, who operates below Laredo in the Rio Grande Valley. Some of his experience is given in the following letters published some time ago in the literature of onion growing:

"Gentlemen—Replying to your inquiry as to publishing what I write you in regard to my onion crops I would say that most certainly I have no objection to your making use of anything that I may have said about onions, for I believe in them. This crop has waked me up and confirmed my belief, gathered from a small patch that I grew four years ago that it was possible to take \$500 from an acre, provided that prices and conditions that prevailed then should ever come around again. This has happened this past season and greater crops even than this one can be grown. Some capital and intelligence is required and if one makes any mistakes this year he should remember them and take good care against their occurring again. (This last is good advice in other lines beside growing onions.) My crop this year has panned out between 130,000 and 140,000 pounds from seven acres and brought me in two and a fourth cents a pound. It cannot be expected that such a yield or such a price can always be realized, but the crop has always brought one and a half cents all around, and even at that price it is a good crop. In transplanting I selected all good, strong plants and consequently the product was very uniform in size. I would make a point of this and insist that it be done. The weak plants planted in rows thickly make good sets and help considerably in paying for the seed. From sets grown in this way I got 25,000 pounds of onions during 1899 and 1900. Creoles grown in this section are not in with the Bermuda. My Bermudas were nearly all gone before the Creoles began to move which is a strong point in favor of the Bermudas."

Under date of December 7th he writes; "I am hard at work this week transplanting my onion crop. We are planting in beds twelve feet wide from center of one border to center of next border, which allows room for eight rows in each bed, taking 270 plants to each row from five to six inches apart. We have to make these beds or ridges in order to confine the water so as to flood the area between the borders. We set between 20,000 and 25,000 plants per day. Greiner, in his book on onion culture, tells about having hands that set 6,000 plants per day. I have had nine men; one drives an Acme harrow, to level the middles between borders; one digs out plants; one sorts them; one trims roots and tops; two stretch lines and punch holes and the balance set the plants. I have seen men run the drill and mark the rows and the hands punch the holes with dibbles, while other hands set the plants, but their rows were crooked. It is true that more onions can grow in a crooked row than in a straight one, but I prefer to have mine straight." December 21st he writes: "I am through setting out the onions; that is, I have completed 300,000 and can get 150,000 more, but will have to irrigate more ground first. This 300,000 was transplanted in twelve days' time; that is, days of actual work, using from nine to thirteen Mexican hands. I kept the land which I intended for onions plowed and harrowed all summer since the first of June and the ground was as loose as ashes. The plan of transplanting onions, as Greiner recommends, is much cheaper and better in every way. I would rather transplant seven or eight acres than sow the seed in the field and thin out

five or six. Judging the future by the past this crop has some great possibilities as well as some small ones." On April 25th he writes: "I am in the midst of getting my onion crop sold and it is exceeding my most extravagant hopes. Since March 18th I have sold 61,270 pounds, for which I received \$1,541.38. I have enough yet on three and three-fourths acres to weigh out up to 80,000 pounds and then there are three and one-fourth acres which were the last transplanted. I estimate the total at this time about 120,000 pounds. Three or four mornings ago I came up where the men were pulling a bed and they were so fine that I had one entire bed loaded into the wagon and weighed, after having been cleaned. They turned out 1,050 pounds. The bed measured 12 x 19 feet, making 1,428 square feet. Dividing 43,560 by 1,428 gives the product of 30 beds, which gives 31,500 per acre, and if we divide 31,500 by 57 pounds, the legal weight of a bushel of onions, it makes a yield of 554 bushels per acre. This crop comes out of ground that was naturally good ground to start with and in 1899 it was fertilized very heavily with manure that came from San Antonio and cost \$1.50 per ton laid down here. These which I speak of were the Crystal Wax, transplanted on the 5th and 6th of December. Several truckers and growers have been to see my place during the past two months. They generally observed that the crop was pretty, but too d—d much work. This crop has been grown absolutely without rain and with but seven irrigations. The onions average a half pound in weight, very uniform and regular in size. My poor neighbor who bought seven pounds of alleged 'Bermuda' seed from—(the name given was that of a prominent Philadelphia seedsman) is badly in the soup. The crop is absolutely nothing but scallions. It is his own fault, of course, for he should have known better than to buy 'cheap' Bermuda seed, but it appears to me that the penitentiary is about the right place for a seedsman who would sell that kind of seed. There would have been big money in them if they had never come up at all. Have just received a telegram ordering 2,500 pounds of onions at \$2.25 per hundred pounds. Sorry to trouble you with so much writing but I thought you might like to hear about results."

May 3rd: "I have sold the entire remainder of my crop. Total weight of the entire crop from seven acres figures to 134,810 pounds. My aim from this time on will be to equal this with very little hopes of exceeding it. In growing onions in the south there are some points that should be presented to beginners, and the first one I want to emphasize is that October is generally very dry and that is the time that the seed should be planted, so the planter should arrange in some way to irrigate his seed beds. Another point is to transplant the entire crop and to do it as fast as possible. It would be much better if the entire crop could be set out in one day. Transplanting requires only about half the work and expense required to thin out a crop and is by far the better way. A most important point is to have the plants carefully selected and only those of uniform size put in beds together. Set the weak ones thickly and raise sets. In cultivating I use five Planet Jr. Double Wheel Hoes and five men to go over the seven acres in two days. I would as soon have a snow storm in sight as to have a lot of men with hoes in my onion crop. But if the ground is treated properly the work with weeds and grass will soon be a very small quantity. The seed should be planted as near October 1st as possible and the grower should have his ground ready for the seed and everything prepared to plant as soon as the seed reaches him. A neighbor of mine, after looking at my crop, says that 'I have had very good luck,' as if there was any such thing as luck. Anyone who was born tired ought not to plant onions, but I don't know of any crop that will pay the grower in this section any better money. My crop and the success attending it are bringing me in a good many inquiries."

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