HOME HORTICULTURE

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Information Packet was Compiled from the Michigan State University Home Horticulture Database.

Onion

Onions grow best in sun and in well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0 to 6.5. Muck soils are ideal. Onions are started from seed, sets or transplants, but seed takes longer. Plant sets or transplants 3/4 inch deep and 1 inch apart then thin to 2 to 3 inch spacings before crowding occurs. Plants that are being thinned may be used as green onions. Planting is done from late March to early April, as bulbs form better in cool temperatures. Green onions can be grown from seed or small transplants. Onion rows are spaced 16 inches apart. If no other fertilizer was used apply 2 cups 5-10-10 per 25 feet of row. Work the fertilizer into a 1-foot wide band where planting will be done. Onions are low plants with sparse root systems so keep weeds under control.

Harvest when the tops fall over and dry up. Spread out the harvested bulbs in a dry area to cure for several days. Use injured bulbs, do not try to store them. The tops of slow maturing plants may be broken over, but do not bruise the neck of the bulb in the process.

Hot onions are due to insufficient watering. Flowering may occur if the sets were too large or stored improperly. Remove the seed stalk before it is 6 inches tall.

Onion Facts

Availability: September through mid November

Days to Maturity: From Sets: 80 to 120 days or From Seed: 90 to 165 days

Approximate Yield/10 Feet of Row: 5 pounds

Per Person Requirements: Fresh use: 6 to 10 feet of row

Storage: 60 to 100 feet of row Weights: Sack: 50 pounds

Onion Insects

Six Spotted Leafhopper

The six-spotted leafhopper is 1/8 inch long, light green and has 6 black spots on the front of its head. It spreads aster yellows. Plants are most vulnerable from the seedling stage until 3/4 grown.

Onion Thrips

Onion thrips are small, cream to brownish black, and less than 1/16 inch long. The insects rasp holes in the leaves with damage most severe in the leaf sheath area at the plant base. The damage is worse after mid-summer or in dry seasons.

Onion Maggot

The onion maggot overwinters as a pupa in the soil. The adults emerge in mid-May and feed on yellow flowers at the edge of the field. They then lay eggs at the base of onion plants. The maggots hatch and burrow into the plants. Mature maggots leave the plant to pupate in the soil. There are 3 generations per year and maggots may be in harvested bulbs.