**Growing Onions in San Antonio**

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Onions are among the easiest vegetables to grow in our area. We grow short-day onions in Texas. They develop during the relatively short days of the South Texas winter.

Short-day onions can be planted by seed in October or by transplants in December or January.

They mature for harvest in May. They are valued for being sweet onions.

Among the most well-known selections are Texas Supersweet 1015Y, Vidalia, Bermuda, Red Hamburger, Granex, and others.

This year, there is a new onion on the market to replace the 1015Y. It is called the Texas Legend.

Texas Legend is deemed superior because of higher yields—as much as 50% in some tests—over the 1015Y, and better storage capabilities.

Texas Legend also matures faster than 1015Y. If you usually harvest your onions on or about May 30, expect to harvest Texas Legend about May 15.

Onions grow best in raised-bed gardens that have been enriched with two inches of compost tilled into the soil. Further enrich the soil with one pound of slow-release or winterizer lawn fertilizer per 50 square feet of garden bed. Plan on side dressing the row every three weeks with a cup (1 pound) of the fertilizer to fulfill the potential of the onion to make a big bulb.

Place the plants every two inches in the row so that the green onions can be harvested in January, February and March. Harvesting the middle two plants as green onions serves to thin the remaining onions so they can reach full size.

Short day onions can also be grown in containers. Onion foliage is attractive and the planting attracts positive attention if it is on the patio. Full sun is desirable, but green onions can be produced in half sun. The bigger the container, the more successful the venture. To expect mature onions by May 15, make sure the thinning occurs.

Drip irrigation is the best way to water the developing onions. An application every three days does well to encourage maximum growth in the absence of rain.

Short-day onions planted as transplants in December or January should not go to seed. Going to seed happens if large transplants are subjected to winter hot spells. To avoid the issue completely, do not select the largest transplants. If you can’t resist the largest transplants because they are immediately available for green onions, harvest and use any onion that sends a seed head up. Onions that have gone to seed will not increase in size and do not store well.

The usual way of storing mature onions is to hang them in a mesh sack in an air conditioned room. I have had success in having high quality onions for use until after Thanksgiving by placing them on a picnic table in the shade out in the yard.

The advantage to picnic table storage is that when the inevitable happens and at least one onion rots, it does not stink up the house and is easier to detect and remove.

Onions are generally pest free. Thrips will sometimes attack the foliage with a result that it turns a milky color. I have never bothered to treat them. The organic control, Spinosad, would probably work and would reduce the small impact on bulb size from thrips if it was applied as soon as the symptom was recognized.

Onions are ready to harvest when the leaves fall over. At that point, bulb growth ends. The plants can be pulled from the ground and set on the soil to harden off. In two or three days when the leaves dry, they can be cut off above the bulb and the bulb can be moved to its storage destination.