



HOW TO GROW SHALLOTS

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Allium cepa ascalonicum, or shallot, is a common bulb used in French cuisine. Generally smaller in size than an onion, it is a milder version with a hint of garlic. Shallots are pretty pricey when buying them in the grocery store so growing your own makes economic sense.

Growing shallots is quite simple and straightforward. They can be planted by seed or bulb. The seeds are less expensive but have a longer growing time and require more work than bulbs. Because most varieties of bulbs can yield 12 bulbs from each individual bulb planted it makes sense to plant bulbs.

Plant the bulbs in late September four to six weeks before first frost or in May two weeks before the last frost. Fall shallots will be larger and ready two to four weeks earlier than sets planted in May. The Fall shallots should be covered with six inches of hay or straw after the first freeze, which should then be removed when the new growth appears in the Spring.

Choose a sunny location and create a well-drained raised bed with compost and soil. The pH of this shallow rooted plant should be neutral, about 6.5, and the plants should be kept evenly moist, fed, and watered. The shallot sets should be planted one inch deep and 6-8 inches apart since a mature plant produces bulbs that are one or two inches in size and most varieties produce 12 bulbs from one individual bulb.

Reduce the watering schedule a few weeks prior to harvesting in late August or September when the greens of the plant start to wither, fall over and die. Reducing the watering allows the plant to form a papery protective skin. The greens will turn brown and droop as the bulbs protrude from the soil and the outer skin becomes papery. Lift the entire clump and gently shake off the soil. Allow them to dry for about two weeks before storing them in mesh bags in a cool dry location.