

# Onion Sowing for Success

By Botanical Interests

Bulbing onions' bulb growth is triggered by day length, which varies with latitude. Starting onions seeds early in the season (likely indoors) produces larger leaf growth prior to day length, triggering bulb growth, which means a better potential for large bulbs, since onion bulbs are actually an extension of the above-ground leaves.

## GENERAL SOWING

When to sow outside: 4 to 6 weeks before average last frost, or as soon as soil can be worked; when soil temperature is at least 45°F. In mild climates, sow in late summer or early fall.

When to start inside: RECOMMENDED.

## Bulbing Onions

In cold climates, seeds should be started indoors 10 to 12 weeks ahead of your average last spring frost. In mild climates, sow seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks prior to transplanting in late summer or early fall.

## Leeks and Shallots

Leeks and shallots are similar to onions-the bigger the transplant, the better potential for larger product-so start these early (8 to 10 weeks before average last spring frost). Shallots are cold hardy and can also be transplanted out in the fall, and over-wintered in any USDA zone.

## Bunching Onions

Sow bunching onions indoors 8 to 10 weeks before average last frost.

## INDOOR SOWING

Use a lightweight seed-starting mix/media (sterile, and lighter than potting mix), and sow seeds ½" deep about ½" apart. Thinning is not necessary. When seedlings get tall, they may begin to flop over; if this happens, trim them to 3" tall to keep them upright.