

ONION - CULTURE.

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ONIONS can be successfully grown on various classes of soil, but it is essential that the soil be of a nature that will not readily bind under hot sunshine nor run together with heavy rains. It must be well drained, and worked to a depth of at least 18 in. Upland pasture land, drained swamp land, rich river-flats or loamy plains, all alike are suitable. The condition required is a soil that can be readily worked to a fine surface, and that will remain porous under all conditions of weather.

Though there are many varieties of onions, they may be broadly divided into three classes: (1) The giant kinds, (2) keepers of moderate size, and (3) early-maturing kinds. Pickling-varieties may be added, though the pickling-quality is largely a matter of cultivation.

The giant kinds are, as a rule, successfully dealt with only by sowing in autumn, although if sown in spring they are likely to develop comparatively large bulbs. They are really not to be relied on to bulb at all; it is largely a matter of weather. The ideal season for onions would be a gentle spring with a fair rainfall, a fair amount of rain till the middle of January, and a dry autumn. A dry summer and wet autumn is bad for onions; rain at that time excites growth and mars the keeping-properties of the bulbs. In the case of large kinds sown in spring, unseasonable rain would probably prevent them bulbing. Large bulbs require a lengthy period for growth, and this is only obtained by sowing in autumn. Sowing too early, however, is dangerous. There is a time in every district that is best, but just when that time is requires some local experience to define. If the seed is put in too late there will be insufficient growth made by planting-time; if sown too early there will be too much growth. To use an expression common to the horticultural craft, there will be "too much autumn" in them, and the majority will bolt to seed and be utterly worthless. Autumn-sown onions must be transplanted; if this is not done many of them will run to seed, and those that do not will never have any keeping-qualities.

In some districts it is rare to get really good bulbs from spring-sown seed. The principal reason for this is frequency of attack by mildew. In these circumstances autumn sowing of keeping-