

How to grow bunching onions

Tending a home garden is a convenient yet heart-filled hobby that produces nutritious fruits and veggies for your family kitchen. Looking for an easy, delicious, and bountiful addition to your garden? Bunching onions—also known as scallions, green onions, spring onions, Welsh onions, and Japanese bunching onions—are home garden staples.

Easy to plant, quick to harvest, grow in bulk, and returns annually. This perennial plant is the perfect, plentiful, low-maintenance addition to any home garden. Not to mention—they're super tasty! With a soft onion flavor, bunching onions can be added to a variety of dishes.

Spice up your kitchen with an abundance of fresh bunching onions from your own backyard. They can be used as a garnish or as the main ingredient of any savory recipe.

Add bunching onions to your favorite potato dish, soup, stir fry, sauce, salsa, salad, and sandwich recipes for a hearty flavor boost. Bunching onions are also a popular centerpiece for flavored breads, muffins, pastries, crusts, and the popular scallion pancakes.

Not only do they taste good, but they are also good for you. Loaded with [fiber, vitamin C, and antioxidants](#), bunching onions are a healthy supplement to your diet. Fiber is great for the digestive system and your overall health; it helps you stay feeling full and may lower heart-related health risks. While vitamin C and antioxidants help fight inflammation, bacteria, and viruses.

With homegrown bunching onions at your fingertips, you can easily reap all of their culinary and health benefits.

Choosing a variety

When it comes to choosing your seeds, there are different types of bunching onions with varied flavor profiles and require varied growing conditions. With this in mind, it is important to choose the right variety for your specific climate and growing space. The most common variations of bunching onions include [Heshiko, Tokyo Long White, and Evergreen](#).

Climate

All bunching onion varieties have foundational growing requirements. Seeds need well-drained, moist, loose soil for optimal results. Bunching onion seeds want all the sun they can get. For the fastest, fullest growth, they prefer full sun exposure. However, they will still grow—slowly but surely—in partial shade.

Bunching onions thrive in the springtime, summer, and fall, although most can also be sown or harvested in the winter, or can be overwintered indoors. While they can withstand typical wintery

conditions, it is vital to prevent your bunching onions from experiencing a harsh frost—this can compromise the plant.

The best time of year to plant bunching onions in your home garden will depend on the [climate and growing conditions in your region](#). In general, bunching onions prefer a sunny spot in your garden, well-draining soil, and can be grown in a wide range of climates. Here are some general guidelines on the best time of year to plant bunching onions in different regions:

In cooler climates with frosty winters, the best time to plant bunching onions is in early spring, as soon as the soil can be worked.

In temperate climates with mild winters, the best time to plant bunching onions is in early to mid-spring, when the risk of frost has passed.

In warm climates with hot summers, the best time to plant bunching onions is in fall or winter, when the weather is cooler and the risk of heat stress is lower.

Sowing

Due to their compact nature, bunching onions are the perfect fit for any small, unused space in your home garden. Single plants can also be grown in your extra 8-inch or larger pots. Sowed with approximately one foot between each plant, bunching onions can be sown in rows or individual trays.

[For proper sowing](#), make sure to scatter small amounts of your bunching onion seeds over the soil and cover them with a light layer of soil atop the seeds.

The soil must be kept moist at all times. But as bunching onion seeds are small and light, they can be easily swept away by heavy watering. Be sure to gently water the soil just enough to keep it damp and hydrated.

If you are using trays, your seedlings should be ready to transplant once they reach 4-6 inches in height.

Heshiko

If you're looking for a crop that is flexible to climate, this Japanese variety may be your bunching onion of choice. This type of bunching onion grows 12-14 inches long and is perfect for overwintering, as it can withstand the indoor climate and reduced sunlight better than other varieties.

However, evergreen seeds need 60 to 120 days to mature, so mark your calendars well in advance to make sure you remember to harvest them!

Tokyo Long White

Tokyo long whites are most flavorful when cooked. Great for sauteeing, stir-frying, baking, and cooking into soups and sauces, it will add a kick of onion flavor to a hot meal.

This variety is ready to harvest quicker than its counterparts, only needing 75 to 90 days to mature.

Evergreen

Perfect for garnishing, evergreen bunching onions are best served when freshly cut. Although it has a mild onion flavor, it packs the best punch when uncooked, chopped, and sprinkled onto your favorite fresh or cooked dishes.

Evergreen seeds need 65 to 120 days to mature, so again—mark your calendars!

Propagating bunching onions

Make the most of the newest addition to your home garden. [Propagate your bunching onions](#) to increase your crop.

Propagating bunching onions from seeds is the most common and economical method. Simply fill a seed tray or pots with seed compost and water. Scatter the seeds on the surface and cover them with a thin layer of compost. Place the tray or pots in a propagator or cover it with a plastic bag to keep the soil moist and at a consistent temperature of around 15-20°C (60-68°F).

When the seedlings are large enough to handle, transplant them into pots or a prepared bed in your garden. The greatest advantage of propagating bunching onions from seeds is its flexibility and cost-effectiveness, but it does require more time and effort.

Propagating bunching onions from sets is faster and easier, but it can be more expensive and limits your choice of varieties. Sets are small, immature plants that have been grown from seeds and then harvested at a very early stage. Plant the sets in a prepared bed or pots, spaced about 6 inches apart. Water well after planting.

Dividing mature plants is a method that can be used to increase your number of plants or to rejuvenate old, overgrown plants. This is usually quick and easy, but may not always produce the best propagation results. For the best care of your divided plants, carefully dig up the plants and divide the clumps into smaller sections, making sure each section has a good root system.

Plant the divisions in a prepared bed or pots, spaced about 15cm (6 inches) apart, and water well after planting.

So, what's the best option for propagating your bunching onions? It depends on your preferences as a home gardener and is based on the climate and growing conditions in your area.

Planting the onions

When it comes time to plant your bunching onions, here is a simple step-by-step guide to getting you started:

1. Choose a sunny spot in your garden with well-draining soil. If the soil in your garden is heavy or clay-like, you can add some compost to improve drainage.
2. Sow the seeds or plant the sets according to the package instructions. Use the above tips under "sowing" to fill in any gaps in the instructions.
3. Space the plants about 15cm (6 inches) apart, either in rows or in a block. Bunching onions can also be grown in pots or containers, as long as they have enough space to grow.
4. Plant the seeds or sets at a depth of about 1cm (0.5 inches).
5. Water the plants well after planting. Bunching onions prefer moist soil. Avoid overwatering, as this can cause the plants to rot.

Caring for the onions

Like all living things, the crops in your home garden need love and care to flourish. [Regular watering and proper fertilization](#) are important for growing healthy bunching onions. Here is why:

Bunching onions need a consistent supply of moisture to grow properly. Water the plants deeply, but not too frequently. Overwatering can cause the bulbs to become mushy and prone to rot, while underwatering can cause the bulbs to become small and stunted.

Onion plants benefit from a balanced fertilizer to promote healthy growth. Follow the package instructions for the best fertilizing schedule. Over-fertilising can cause the bulbs to become too large and split, while under-fertilizing can cause the bulbs to be small and stunted.

Protecting your onions from weeds and pests is essential for bunching onion care. Weeds can harbor pests and diseases and compete with the onion plants for water and nutrients. To control weeds, hand-pull them or use a hoe to chop off the weeds at the base. Mulching the area

around the onion plants with a layer of compost, straw, or wood chips can also help to suppress weeds.

However, there are some [more specific problems](#) that may arise when growing bunching onions. This includes fungal diseases, bulb splitting, and bolting.

Onion plants are susceptible to several fungal diseases, including downy mildew, white rot, and neck rot. To prevent fungal diseases, choose disease-resistant varieties, practice crop rotation, and keep the plants well-ventilated by avoiding overcrowding. Don't compromise your garden—if the plants do become infected, remove and destroy the affected plants to prevent the spread of the disease.

Bulb splitting can occur if the plants receive too much water or fertilizer. To prevent bulb splitting, water the plants regularly but not too frequently. Avoid using too much nitrogen-rich fertilizer, as this can cause the bulbs to become too large and split.

Bolting is a process in which the onion plants produce a flower stalk and seeds instead of forming bulbs. This can be caused by a combination of factors, including fluctuating temperatures, insufficient water, and prolonged stress. To prevent bolting, provide the plants with consistent moisture and a favorable growing environment.

Managing pests and disease

Unfortunately, bunching onions are susceptible to certain pests and diseases such as [onion maggots, thrips, and downy mildew](#). Knowing what to look for, learning how to identify it, and understanding how to prevent and treat your plants are crucial to growing healthy plants and keeping your home garden clean. This is why it is so important to monitor the onion patch regularly and take prompt action if any issues arise.

To control these pests, you can try using a natural pest repellent or a chemical pesticide according to the package instructions. You can also try to prevent pest infestations by keeping the onion patch clean and free of debris, and by rotating the location of the onion patch each year.

Onion maggots are small, white insects that lay their eggs in the soil around onion plants. When the eggs hatch, the maggots burrow into the bulbs and cause them to rot.

Thrips are small, slender insects that feed on the foliage of onion plants, causing the leaves to become distorted and discolored.

To control onion maggots and thrips, you can use a chemical insecticide according to the package instructions, or try a natural pest repellent such as neem oil, diatomaceous earth, or pyrethrum.

Downy mildew is a fungal disease that causes yellow or brown spots on the leaves of onion plants. The fungus thrives in cool, damp conditions and can spread quickly from plant to plant. To prevent downy mildew, choose disease-resistant varieties, practice crop rotation, and keep the plants well-ventilated by avoiding overcrowding. If the plants do become infected, remove and destroy the affected plants to prevent the spread of the disease.

Regularly inspecting the onion plants for signs of pests or diseases can help you catch problems early and take action before they get out of control.

Harvesting and storing the onions

Now, it's time to reap the benefits of all of your hard work and care. What's great about this plant is that you plant them once, but can harvest throughout the season. Bunching onions provide a fruitful harvest as they will continue to grow and produce more shoots after your first harvest.

Bunching onions are typically ready to harvest about 8-12 weeks after planting, depending on the variety and growing conditions. The stalks should be about 15cm (6 inches) tall and the bulbs are about the size of a quarter. You can also test the readiness of the onions by gently pulling on the stalks. If they come out easily, they are ready to be harvested. [To harvest the onions](#), cut them just above the roots with a sharp knife or scissors.

If you want to store and preserve your crops, here are some simple steps:

1. **Dry the onions:** After harvesting, allow the onions to dry in a well-ventilated area out of direct sunlight. This can be done by laying the onions out on a clean surface or hanging them in bunches. The drying process, also known as curing, helps to remove excess moisture and improve the storage life of the onions.
2. **Remove the tops:** Once the onions are dry, cut off the tops about 1 inch above the bulb.
3. **Store in a cool, dry place:** Store the onions in a cool, dry place with good air circulation. A garage, basement, or pantry are all good options. Avoid storing onions in a damp or humid place, as this can cause them to rot.
4. **Use a mesh bag or basket:** To allow for good air circulation, store the onions in a mesh bag or basket. This will also help to prevent the onions from bruising or getting damaged.
5. **Check for spoilage:** Periodically check the onions for spoilage and remove any that show signs of decay or damage.

Conclusion

Bunching onions are the perfect addition to any home garden. Whether you are a first-time or seasoned gardener, this plant is an easy, cost-effective, and space-effective, crop.

Enjoy their savory flavor and nutrients by planting, sowing, caring for, and propagating your bunching onions. Choose the best variety for your culinary needs and regional climate by researching your seed type.

But remember, monitoring your plants for pests and diseases is key to healthy onions and a healthy garden. Some risks are specific to onion plants to watch out for such as fungal diseases, bulb splitting, bolting, onion maggots, thrips, and downy mildew.

Take advantage of the bunching onion's bountiful harvest by properly cutting the stalks above the root and coming back for more when they regrow. Perfect for drying and storing, your seasonal gardening can produce a crop that lasts.

Enjoy your bunching onions and happy home gardening!

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