

Tree Onions

Botanical Name: *Allium cepa proliferum*

Common Names: Tree Onions, Top Onions, Topset Onions, Top Setting Onions, Walking Onions, Egyptian Walking Onions, Air Onions

Description:

The tree onion is a biennial plant meaning it should usually flower in its second year. However, you will find it produces small onion bulbs at the base of the plants and a multitude of small top sets where a flower should be. The number and size of bulbils can vary significantly between about 3 large top set onions and 15 smaller sets.

The parent onion behaves as a multiplier or shallot and can split to produce several small tender onions that can be eaten or regrown.

Edible Uses:

The top sets or bulbils are an ideal size for pickling or chopping into salads.

The onion greens can be used just like spring onions

The mature onions are tender and can be used raw or cooked like normal onions.

Planting in the UK

Planting Period: May to December. The tree onion is quite hardy but can certainly benefit from a top mulch or growing in an unheated greenhouse to protect from frosts until it becomes established

Depth: Plant about 25mm (1 inch) deep

Spacing: Allow about 15 to 20cm between plants (6 to 8 inches)

Soil - Growing Medium: If growing in the ground, try and prepare the area in advance to produce a rich, free draining loam with a slow release, low nitrogen fertiliser. Tree onions can be grown in most composts but ensure they don't remain waterlogged or rotting of the bulb can occur. Pot grown plants can benefit from a full spectrum fertiliser that contains calcium, magnesium and sulphur.

Harvesting

Onions have a natural cycle and the onion stems will tend to dry and die back as the goodness is transferred to the onion bulb. Collect the bulbils and replant those you are using for propagation. Collect the base bulbs and allow to air dry, preferably on a mesh to avoid damp areas that may encourage mould growth. Store in a cool, dry area.

Personal Note:

I'd love to discover how you found out about tree onions and learn from your experiences growing them. If you'd like to send a few words or photos for my website I'd love to hear from you.

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