

April-May Onion and Garlic Tips by Master Gardener Teresa Wilts

Onions: By now your onions should be bulbing. This is your cue to stop fertilizing them.

It's important to not water too close to harvest as it can make onions prone to rotting in storage. Take a moment to read these tips below.

When to Stop Watering

You will want to stop watering about one to two weeks before harvest. You'll notice the lower leaves start to yellow and wither. Shortly after, the stems will flop over at the neck. Wait until most of them have done so, then bend over the stems of any remaining upright plants. Bending them above the bulb will signal the plants to enter dormancy.

Bolted Onions

Before harvesting, look over your onions. Onions will occasionally bolt (produce a flower stalk), as a reaction to cold weather stress. If you find that some of your onions have bolted, they should be eaten right away. They can't be stored.

Garlic

At this point, new leaves are no longer being produced, so it is time to stop feeding garlic.

As harvest approaches, plants begin to dry down from the lowest leaf up and from the leaf tips downward, one leaf at a time. When this happens reduce watering. Filaree, where we purchase the seed garlic, recommends harvesting when the top 4 leaves are still 50% green and the lower leaves are completely dry. Bundle in groups of 5-10 plants and hang to dry undercover, out of direct sunlight with good air circulation.

The plants and bulbs cure completely after 3-4 weeks, depending on the weather. Check clove wrappers to make sure they are dry.

When completely cured, the neck may be cut about 1/2 inch above the bulb without any moisture being apparent.

Trim roots to 1/2 inch. Store in netted onion bags or ventilated crates.

Storing: most garlies store well at room temperature, although ideally 55-65 is a better range. Good luck with that around here!

Whew, if you are still with me, happy harvesting. By the looks of the garlic in the gardens, it has been a good year, so I'm hopeful that we will have a great harvest. Enjoy!