

Not too late to plant shallots

Accustomed to the valley's climate, the second Monday in October is traditionally a good time to start crop

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Master Gardener

Question: Is it too late to plant shallots? Last year my shallots were very small. How can I grow larger shallots?

Answer: No, it is not too late, but you should plant them soon.

Traditionally, shallots are planted around the second Monday in October. Shallots are well adapted to the Umpqua valley's wet, cool winters and dry summers and will produce a nice harvest of large shallot bulbs in early July.

Although shallots can be grown from seed, it is best to grow shallots from bulbs (sets). You can buy shallot bulbs from local nursery centers, from vendors at the Farmer's Market or from a large number of online seed companies. The shallots at the grocery stores have been treated to reduce sprouting so that is not a good source.

There are a good number of different varieties of shallots available. They come in different colors, shapes and sizes. Each bulb you plant will produce three to seven new bulbs. Once you start to grow shallots, you can replant a portion of your crop for the next year. This means you never have to buy seed shallots again!

Shallots have very short roots, so it is important to keep water and nutrients close by. Although shallots can tolerate heavy soils because the bulbs form on top of the soil, well-amended soil will produce more and larger shallot bulbs. Prepare your soil by digging in a good bit of compost and a little fertilizer to a depth of at least one foot.

Set up your irrigation system as you will need to provide regular irrigation until the rains start in the fall and then again in the early summer. You can hand water shallots, but I prefer to use a T-Tape irrigation system because it does not get the leaves or soil surface wet. Not wetting the leaves reduces disease, while dry soil reduces weed seed germination.

Once your soil is ready, plant



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individual shallot bulbs on 4-5 inch centers. It is critical that you plant the

bulbs with the root end down. If this does not happen, the shallots will not form correctly. The bulbs should be simply pressed into the soil until the top of the bulb is just at or just below the top of the soil. Leaving a little bit of the bulb sticking out will be perfect.

Finish off by irrigating them well and setting up an irrigation schedule that will keep them moist but not water logged until the winter rains start.

In a few weeks, they should sprout and grow to about a foot high before winter sets in and they stop growing. Keep your shallot plot weed-free, as shallots do not compete well against weeds. In late February,

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give your shallots a bit more fertilizer. This will get them ready to

take off as soon as the weather warms up.

When the rains stop in the spring, start regular irrigation and continue to control weeds. Your shallots may send up a flower stalk. If that happens, cut the stalk out just above where it emerges from the stem. This will force the shallot to focus its energy on growing larger bulbs.

By early July consider reducing the irrigation. Late in June, the outer leaves will start to yellow. When most, if not all, the leaves have turned brown, harvest your shallots. To harvest, gently lift the whole plant out of the soil and gently remove any large bits of soil hanging on the roots.



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After harvesting shallots, lay the whole plant out in a single layer to cure for about two weeks.

Lay the whole plant out in a single layer, out of direct sunlight, to cure for about two weeks. After they have cured, you can cut the stems off, remove any remaining soil and store in a cool, dark place. Your shallots should store for about a year. Set aside the largest bulbs to plant for the following season.

I hope you enjoy growing and eating your home-grown shallots.

Do you have a gardening question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners via email at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, by phone at 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg.