

Onions – Trialing ‘17 – Zoey, Red Carpet, Blush

Fresh Varieties: Tropea, Sierra Blanca, Ailsa Craig, Cabernet

Storage Varieties - Redwing, Red Hawk, Cortland, Patterson

Past Performers of Note – Prince, Copra, also like OP > Rossa Di Milano, New York Early

Onion Fertility

We emphasize calcium availability for good root growth, sulfur for flavor and health... copper for skin color, and avoid late season N to help dry down.

Transplanting: 4 seeds per cell into 98's or 128's. – **presuming decent germination rates**

3 rows at 9-12" spacing – our standard spacing is currently 9" – you can change spacing to meet the growing conditions and/or preferred sizes for marketing

6" for mini onions – purplettes, eclipse, etc – trial Cabernet 2017...

2017 tropea underperformed at 6" for 2nd year in a row... move to 9" in 2018

Row Cover – if time and necessary – it helps get plants established (and weeds), and may provide protection from onion root maggot – we didn't use in 2017 – too busy.

Onion Root Maggot – we use 2 primary methods of control – blue sticky cards and beneficial nematodes – we order 2 rounds of nematodes so we can apply as needed as we plant alliums (and ds peas, early beans). Typically drench with nematodes at planting and spray when flight is ongoing or when the timing works out...

Cultivation, Cultivation, Cultivation

We typically cultivate our onions 4-6 times, including 2-3 handweeding sessions, depending on weed pressure and the season. We like the allium beds very clean on July 1st and plan for one more handweeding session after the 1st of July. Storage types will usually get an extra or late cultivation around mid-July to help keep the beds clean (purslane pressure at Brix Bounty).

In practice, the cultivation cycle looks like (~25-30 min to hoe 200 bed feet, up to 1 hr to handweed 200 bed feet):

1st cultivation – scuffle hoe + wheel tracks

2nd cultivation – handweeding

3rd cultivation – scuffle hoe + wheel tracks (optional sidedressing beforehand)

4th cultivation – cobra and handweeding

5th cultivation – wheel tracks only

6th cultivation – handweeding if necessary

2017 Dates at Brix – TP ~504/505, 1st cultivation 517, 607+hw, 614 *sidedressing, 621+hw, 704 wto, 711 hw & wt

2017, we expect Tropea or Sierra Blanca for Market on July 20th, for farmstand July 22nd, and for CSA starting July 25th

CSA Allium Schedule

Wk 1 – scallions (not in '17), Wk 2 – scallions and scapes, Wk 3 – scallions and scapes, Wk 4 – wildcard

Wk 5 – mini onions, Wk 6 – fresh garlic and scallions, Wk 7 – fresh garlic and wildcard, Wk 8 (725) – Tropea

August – Sierra Blanca, Cabernet, Ailsa Craig, + garlic and scallions, September & October – add leeks to rotation.

2017 Allium Production at Brix (all amounts in bed feet), we plant about ½ acre of alliums

(~7 acres in total production with approx. 2-3 of these 7 acres double cropped)

~200 ft of mini onions, ~200 ft of shallots, 600 ft of leeks, 100 ft of bunching leeks, 800 ft fresh onions, 800 ft storage varieties, 1,200 ft of scallions, 1000 ft of garlic

We don't use a heated greenhouse, so with a cool spring, our transplants were ready in early May – we did drench with Nitrogen in the greenhouse (crab meal and a pinch of calcium nitrate – not OMRI)

In Season Fertility Boost

Sidedressing on 614 – per ~80' bed (~500 square feet): 4# alfalfa meal, 3# peanut meal, 2.5# lobster meal, 5# soft rock phosphate (none of these were applied to our onion beds at planting b/c we didn't place our full fertility order in a timely fashion). This is equivalent to 320# alfalfa meal, 240# peanut meal, 200# lobster meal, and 400# soft rock phosphate per acre... this sidedressing will supply ~40# Nitrogen per acre.

We typically foliar spray our onions 3-5x per season... in 2017 we've foliar sprayed 0 times to date.

Pests and Diseases:

We have thrips, I don't pay them too much attention, someday I might.

I typically don't worry too much about disease. Purple Blotch is our most common disease, we'll harvest in the fall according to weather cycles – i.e. dodge last minute heavy rainfall.

Harvest

Fresh onions – clip tops and roots (peel and spray if necessary)

Dry onions, we typically field cure and then harvest into bins and set in the barn or greenhouse (under shade cloth) Note: we don't have good storage systems for fall/winter crops.

Yield: our aim is 5# per bed foot, absolute best we've achieved is 8# per bed foot for fresh varieties under ideal growing conditions. If we set out 9-12 onions per bed foot then we are aiming for 6-10 oz. onions

2017 Cabernet Test (at 6'' spacing in high fertility field) – 7.22.17 – 6 bed feet > 21 boxes (pints) at \$3 = \$63 or \$11/bed'

Market Price - we sell our onions individually by the piece (average \$2/pound – i.e. small onions \$.75, medium \$1, premium \$1.50) or in quarts (~2.5# heaping) for \$5, occasionally we'll bunch fresh onions at the outset... to make them more appealing/exciting. Mini Onions in pints for \$3 (if we don't bunch them), Shallots in half pints for \$3. Our prices are set to make payment with our honor system easy.

Demand: Onions are in demand throughout the season, we typically start harvesting mini-onions late June or early July and move onto Tropea, Sierra Blanca, Cabernet starting in late July. We'll market onions through December.

Biggest Challenges – weed management, onion root maggot, and _____

Keys to Profitable Onions

- Keep the weeds in check
- Strong, Vigorous Early Season Growth (that didn't happen in 2017)
- Efficient processing and taking the post harvest costs (time) into consideration.