

# Johnson Brothers Greenhouses

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## Onions, Garlic, Shallots & Potatoes

### Onions, Garlic & Shallots:

Oregon's northwest climate is very well suited for the cultivation of root vegetables. Onions, Garlic & Shallots are easy to grow, not prone to pest problems and produce abundantly in rich, well-drained soil. Most sets or cloves are planted before the end of October or by late spring so there is sufficient root establishment before the cold and damp or scorching heat sets in. All require full sun to grow and thrive.

Start by placing a teaspoon of bone meal in a hole, each 4 to 6 inches apart, covering the clove or set with 1 to 2 inches of soil. In spring, fertilize with a high nitrogen fertilizer and keep moist. As harvest approaches, watering should be less frequent and flower stalks should be removed to redirect energy to the bulb. Harvest when leaves begin to dry or when tops lay down in mid-late summer. Tie or braid stalks in small bundles to dry in a dry and well-ventilated area.

### Potatoes

Potatoes are susceptible to several serious diseases. Even though the potatoes you saved from the previous year, or the potatoes you see in the supermarket may appear healthy, they should not be used for your seed. Certified seed potatoes are disease free, and have been selected to give you the best results with the highest yields. Also, market potatoes have been treated to retard growth.

Best crop production is achieved when planted in a light, loose, well-drained, but moisture retentive loam. They prefer a slightly acidic soil with a pH of 5.8 to 6.5. Potatoes may be planted as soon as the ground can be worked in the early spring. They will begin to grow once the soil temperature has reached 45°F. The soil should be evenly moist, but not wet or soggy. Plant potato seeds every 15 inches, with rows spaced 2.5 to 3 feet apart. Each 3-4 foot diameter mound can support 6-8 plants. For the maximum crop production, keep your vines well watered throughout the summer, but especially during the period when they are in flower and immediately after.

This is the time when the plant is creating the new tubers, and water is critical. Water early in the day so that the foliage has time to dry completely before evening. When foliage turns yellow and dies back, discontinue watering to allow the tubers to "mature" for a week or two before harvesting. You may begin to harvest your potatoes 2 to 3-weeks after the plants have finished flowering. At this time you will only find small "baby" potatoes *if* you were to dig up a plant.

Potatoes can be harvested any time after this, by gently loosening the soil, reaching under the plant, and removing the largest tubers, leaving the smaller ones to continue growing. If you want late potatoes for storage, wait 2-3 weeks after the foliage dies back. If the weather is dry, allow the potatoes to lay on the soil surface, unwashed, for 2-3 days so they can dry. If the weather is wet, or rain is expected, move the harvest to a cool, dry area (*like a garage or basement*) for the drying period. This drying step is necessary to mature the potato skin, which will protect the potato during storage. If, by the end of September, the plants have not begun to die back, all of the foliage should be cut off to ensure your crop has ample time to mature before winter.