

Chapter 32. Onion, Leek, and Chive Production in Florida

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BOTANY

Nomenclature

Family - Alliaceae (Amaryillidaceae)

Onion - Allium cepa

Leek - Allium ampeloprasum **Chive** - Allium schoenoprasum

Origin

It is believed that all of the edible onions and their relatives are native to Asia.

Related Species

Garlic, shallot, and various exotic onions also are members of the Alliaceae family. Many important ornamentals also are included in this family.

VARIETIES

Onion and leek varieties grown in Florida are listed below (H=hybrid):

Onion

Caramelo (H)
Dessex (H)
Georgia (H)
Granex 33 (H)
Linda Vista (H)
Savannah Sweet (H)
Sugar Belle (H)
Sweet Success (H)

Bunching Onion

Perfecto Blanco Tokyo Long White White Portugal

Leeks (Fig. 32-1)
King Richard
Tivi
Verina

SEEDING AND PLANTING

Planting dates and seeding information are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Seeding and planting information for onion and allies.

Planting dates	Seeded	Transplanted	
North Florida	Mid Sept - mid Nov	Nov - Jan	
Central Florida	Oct	Dec - Jan	
South Florida	Oct	Dec - Jan	
Planting information			
Distance between rows (in) ¹	14 - 18	14 - 18	
Distance between plants (in)	3 - 4	4 - 6	
Seeding depth (in)	0.25 - 0.5	-	
Seed per acre (lb)	3 - 4	1.0	
Days to maturity	100 - 130	100 - 130 ²	
Plant populations (acre)	149,343	112,123	

FERTILIZER AND LIME

For unmulched onions with subsurface or sprinkler irrigation, broadcast all P_2O_5 micronutrients, and 20 to 25% of N and K_2O before planting (Fig. 32-2). Apply remaining N and K_2O in split applications through the season up to bulb initiation. Overfertilization with N during bulbing can lead to double bulbs and split bulbs.

For mulched onions, incorporate all fertilizer in bed prior to mulching (Fig. 32-3). For mulched onions with subsurface irrigation, incorporate only 20 to 25% of the N and K_2O . Place remaining N and K_2O in bands in grooves 2 to 3 inches deep between rows on bed (see Table 2).

IRRIGATION

Irrigation requirements of onions can be estimated from crop coefficients given in Tables 4 to 6 in Chapter 8, *Principles and Practices of Irrigation Management for Vegetables*. Irrigation requirements of leek and chives are expected to be similar to those shown for onions. Peak water use during rapid growth and development stages will be about 95% of ETo. Water use will continue at this rate for plants that are harvested green, while water use will drop to about 75% of ETo for onions that are allowed to dry before harvest. See Table 3 in Chapter 8, *Principles and Practices of Irrigation Management for Vegetables* for estimates of ETo in inches per day and gallons per acre per day for Florida climate conditions.

For optimum production, irrigations should be scheduled to maintain adequate soil moisture throughout the growing season for plants that are harvested green. For onions that are to be harvested dry, irrigation can be discontinued after full growth has been obtained and the plants begin to dry. For drip and sprinkler irrigation, small, frequent applications should be scheduled to avoid water and nutrient losses below the plant root zone. For seepage irrigation, the field water table should be maintained sufficiently high that soil moisture is adequate but not excessively wet in the plant root zone throughout the growing season or until the plants are allowed to begin to dry for harvest.

PLANT TISSUE ANALYSIS

Plant tissue analysis information for onion and allies is given in Table 3. The analysis was done prior to bulbing, using the most recently matured leaf.

WEED MANAGEMENT

Herbicides labeled for weed control in onions and allies are listed in Table 4.

DISEASE MANAGEMENT

The chemicals approved for disease management in onion and leek are listed in Table 5.

INSECT MANAGEMENT

Table 6 outlines the insecticides approved for use on insects attacking onion and allies.

Table 2. Soil test and fertilizer recommendations for mineral soils for onion and allies.¹

Target pH	N Ib/A²	VL	L	M	Н	VH	VL	L	M	Н	VH
				P ₂ O ₅ ²					K ₂ 0		
				2 3		(lb/A/cro	o season)		L		
Sweet bulb							,				
6.5	150	150	120	100	0	0	150	120	100	0	0
Bunching onion											
6.5	120	120	100	100	0	0	120	100	100	0	0
Leek											
6.5	120	120	100	100	0	0	120	100	100	0	0

¹ See Chapter 2 section on supplemental fertilizer application and best management practices, pg 11.

Table 3. Plant tissue analysis just prior to bulbing for onion and allies. Dry wt. basis.

	N	Р	K	Ca	Mg	S		Fe	Mn	Zn	В	Cu
Status	Percent								Parts	per milli	on	
Deficient	<2.0	0.2	1.5	0.6	0.15	0.2		50	10	15	10	5
Adequate range	2.0-3.0	0.2-0.5	1.5-3.0	0.6-0.8	0.15-0.30	0.2-0.6		50-100	10-20	15-20	10-25	5-10
High	>3.0	0.5	3.0	0.8	0.30	0.6		100	20	20	25	10
Toxic (>)											100	

² Seeds and transplants may benefit from applications of a starter solution at a rate no greater than 10 to 15 lbs/acre for N and P₂O₅, and applied through the plant hole or near the seeds.

Table 4. Chemical weed con	trols: onions, leek, garlic & shallot			
		Time of	Rate (lbs.	
Herbicide	Labeled crops	application to crop	Mineral	Muck
	onions (dry bulb), garlic, shallots depth of 1-2 inches in well worked soil hes deep. For furrow irrigation thorough			
5 true leaves or to garlic after em morningglory, spiny pigweed, rag at least 50 to 70 gallons of water	Onions Garlic planting until just prior to crop emerge ergence but before 12 inches in height. weed, etc. (see label). When they are sn per acre for application. Soil and onion Onion varieties vary in sensitivity. Use	Controls several broadleaf weeds such nall, do not exceed 4 leaf stage, or les foliage must be dry at time of applicat	n as lambsquarte s than 2 inches	er, smartweed, in height. Use
down of emerged broadleaf weed	(All) s a preplant burndown treatment and/or s. May be tank mixed with other registe op oil concentrate (coc) or non-ionic su	red herbicides. May be applied at up	0.031 n to row middle: to 2 oz (0.031 lt	0.031 s for the burn- o ai). Use a
at 1% v/v in the finished spray vo	Onions (dry bulb) Garlic Shallots (dry bulbs) postemergence herbicide for control of a lume should range from 5 to 40 gallons perennial grasses. Do not apply within 4	per acre. Rates range from 6 to 8 oz	0.94125 use a crop oil c . Product per ac	.094128 concentrate re for annual
weed-free field up to 14 weeks af	Onions, Garlic annuals. Incorporate 0.5 to 1.0 inch with ter planting at rates not exceeding 10.5 lbs. ai./acre. Note precautions of plantin	lbs. ai./acre per season. In Hastings a	rea, onions may	y treatment to be injured with
actively growing grass species at	Dry bulb onions, garlic ing grass weeds. A total of 48 oz. produ specific growth stages are specified on tage. Use oil concentrates or non-ionic	the label. Depending on the species, t	he growth stage	for best con-
Glyphosate (Roundup, Durango Touchdown, Glyphomax) Remarks: Roundup, Glyphomax	and Touchdown have several formulat	Chemical fallow Preplant, pre emergence, Pre transplant tions. Check the label of each for spe	0.3 - 1.0	ections.
Oxyfluorfen (Goal 2XL) (Goaltender)	Dry bulb onions	Early postemergence Posttransplant	0.12 0.5	
Remarks: Spray when seeded or cal. Necrotic lesions, twisting or s	ions have 2 fully developed true leaves. stunting of onion plants can occur if app onion plant. Multiple applications may b	On transplanted onions spray as sooi lications are made during cool, wet w	n after transplan eather or prior t	
Paraquat (Gramoxone Intron) (Firestorm)	Seeded onions: Green or dry bulb & Garlic reatment prior to, during or after seedin	Preplant Preemergence	0.63 - 0.94	0.63 - 0.94
Weeds and grasses emerging after non-ionic surfactant with applicat	er treatment will not be controlled. Crop ion. Do not apply within 60 days of harv	plants emerged at the time of applicatest.	ion will be dama	aged. Use a
be applied sequentially as follows 4.8 pts/A; Late postemergence (6 Do not apply preemergence throu	Dry Bulb Onions as broadcast treatment when onions ha : Preemergence through loop stage (2.4 to 9 true leaf stage) 3.6 to 4.8 pts/A. D gh loop stage if heavy rains are expecte Do not apply within 45 days of harvest.	4 to 4.8 pts/A); Early postemergence (o not apply more than 14.4 pts/A per d or severe crop injury may result. If	2 to 6 true leaf s growing season	stage) 3.6 to on muck soils.
Sethoxydim (Poast)	Bulb vegetables: all onions, dry bulb and bunching, garlic, leeks	Postemergence	.187	.187
	growing grass weeds. Always add a cro te of 1 pt. material may be used. Do no			y within 30

 Table 5. Disease management for onion.

Chemical (a.i.)	FRAC Group ¹	Maximum Application	Rate/Acre/ Season	Min. Days to Harvest	Pertinent Diseases or Pathogens	Remarks ²
Ridomil Gold 4 EC (mefenoxam)	4	1 pt./trted acre			Pythium seedling blight	Apply at seeding in a 7-12" band on soil over seed furrow
Manex 4 F (maneb)	M3	2.4 qts	24 qts ¹	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Do not apply to exposed bulbs
Maneb 80 WP (maneb)	M3	3 lbs	30 lbs ²	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Do not apply to exposed bulbs
Botran 75 W (dichloran)	14	5 1/3 lbs	5 1/3 lbs		Botrytis	Limit is 1 appl./crop
Botran 5 F (dichloran)	14	1 3/5 qts	2 qts	14	Botrytis	Do not plant spinach as a follow up crop
Penncozeb, Dithane M45, or Manzate 80 WPs (Dry bulb only) (mancozeb)	M3	3 lbs	30 lbs	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Do not apply to exposed bulbs
Dithane F-45 or Manex II 4 FLs (Dry bulb only) (mancozeb)	M3	2.4 qts	24 qts	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Do not apply to exposed bulbs
Rovral 75 WG (Dry bulb only) (ipro- dione)	2	1 lb	5 lbs	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Limit 5 appl./season
Maneb 75 DF (maneb)	M3	3 lbs	32 lbs ³	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Do not apply to exposed bulbs
Equus 720 or Echo 720 6 FLs (chloro- thalonil)	M5	2 pts ⁴	20 pts	7 ⁵	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Limit is 3 appl./crop for green bunching onions, leeks or shal- lots
Bravo Ultrex or Echo Ultimate 82.5 WDGs (chlorothalonil)	M5	1.8 lbs ⁶	18.2 lbs (8.2 lbs for green onions, shallots & leeks)	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Limit is 3 appl./crop for green bunching onions, leeks or shal- lots
Penncozeb, Dithane, or Manzate 75 DFs (mancozeb)	M3	3 lbs	32 lbs	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Do not apply to exposed bulbs
Bravo Weather Stik 6 F (chlorothalonil)	M5	2 pts ⁴	9 pts	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch	Limit is 3 appl./crop for green bunching onions, leeks or shal- lots
Pristine 38 WG (pyraclostrobin/ boscalid)	11 + 7	18.5 ozs	111 ozs	7	Botrytis leaf blight Purple blotch Stemphyllium leaf blight	Limit is 6 appl./crop & alternate chemistry
Quadris Opti 0.5 & 5 FL (azoxystrobin)	11	3.2 pts	11.1 pts	14	Purple blotch Botrytis	Limit is 3 appl./crop & alternate chemistry. For green bunching, leeks & shallots
Endura 70 WP (boscalid)	7	6.8 ozs	41 ozs	7	Purple blotch Botrytis	Limit is 6 appl/crop & alternate chemistry
Acrobat 50WP (dimethomorph)	40	6.4 oz	32 oz	0	Downy mildew	Must be applied in a tank mix wi another fungicide active against downy mildew. Do not make mo than 2 sequential appl.
Phostrol 54% Salt (salts of phosphorus acid)	33	3.75 pt	26.25pt	0	Powdery mildew	
Aliette WDG (fosetyl-Al)	33	3.0 lb	21lb	7	Downy mildew Purple blotch	

Table 5. Continued.

Chemical (a.i.)	FRAC Group ¹	Maximum Application	Rate/Acre/ Season	Min. Days to Harvest	Pertinent Diseases or Pathogens	Remarks ²
Helena Prophyt 54.5% Salt (potas- sium phosphite)	33	2 qt		0	Powdery mildew	
Various copper compounds (see ind. Labels), including Basic Copper 53, Champ, COC, Copper Count-N, Cuprofix Disperss, Kocide, Nordox, Nu Cop,	M1				Bacterial blight Downy mildew Purple blotch	See the individual labels
Iprodione 4L (iprodione)	2	1.5 pt	7.5 pt	7	Botrytis Purple blotch	
Scala SC (pyrimethanil)	9	18 oz	54 oz	7	Botrytis Purple blotch	
Switch 625WG (cyprodinil/fludioxo- nil)	9 + 12	14 oz	56 oz	7	Botrytis Purple blotch	After 2 appl. of Switch, a/w with another fungicide with a different mode of action for 2 applications
Serenade Max (bio- fungicide) (QST 713 strain of Bacillus subtilis)		3 lb		0	Botrytis Downy mildew Purple blotch Rust	
Sonata (biofungicide) (QST 2808 strain of Bacillus pumilis)		4 qt		0	Downy mildew Powdery mildew Rust	
Topsin M 70WDG (other formulations available) (thiophan- ate-methyl)	1	2 lb			White rot	Spray in open furrows at seeding. Not to be used in any irrigation system
Ultra Flourish 2EC (mefenoxam)	4	2 pt/trtd acre			Pythium damping-off	Soil treatment at planting only
¹ 16.8 qts. for green o	nions					
² 21.0 lbs. for green c	nions					
³ 22.4 lbs. for green of	onions					
⁴ 3 pts. for green bun	ching, leeks	s, shallots & ga	ırlic			
⁵ 14 days for green bu	unching, lee	eks, shallots &	garlic			
⁶ 2.7 lbs. for garlic						

Table 6. Selected insecticides approved for use on insects attaching onions and allies.

Trade Name (Common Name)	Rate (product/acre)	REI (hours)	Days to Harvest	Insects	MOA Code ¹	Notes
Agree WG (Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies aizawai)	1.0-2.0 lb	4	0	lepidopteran larvae (cater- pillar pests)	11B1	Apply when larvae are small for best control. OMRI-listed ² .
*Ambush 25W (permethrin) (dry only)	6.4-19.2 oz	12	1	armyworms, cutworms, leafminers, onion mag- got (adults), onion thrips, stink bugs	3	Dry bulb only and garlic. Maximum of 128 oz/acre per season.
*Ammo 2.5 EC (cypermethrin)	2.0-5.0 fl oz	12	7	aphids, armyworms, cut- worms, leafminers, onion maggot adults, stink bugs	3	All Allium spp., green and dry. Maximum of 25 oz product/acre per season.
Aza-Direct (azadirachtin)	1-2 pts, up to 3.5, if needed	4	0	aphids, beetles, caterpillars, leafhoppers, leafminers, mites, stink bugs, thrips, weevils, whiteflies	26	Antifeedant, repellant, insect growth regulator. OMRI-listed ² .
Azatin XL (azadirachtin)	5-21 fl oz	4	0	aphids, beetles, caterpillars, leafhoppers, leafminers, thrips, weevils, whiteflies	26	Antifeedant, repellant, insect growth regulator.
Biobit HP (Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies kurstaki)	0.5-2.0 lb	4	0	caterpillars (will not con- trol large armyworms)	11B2	Treat when larvae are young. Good coverage is essential. Can be used in the greenhouse. OMRI-listed ² .
BotaniGard 22 WP, ES (Beauveria bassiana)	WP: 0.5-2 lb/100 gal ES: 0.5-2 qts/100 gal	4	0	aphids, thrips, whiteflies		May be used in greenhouses. Contact dealer for recommen- dations if an adjuvant must be used. Not compatible in tank mix with fungicides.
Crymax WDG (Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies kurstaki)	0.5-2.0 lb	4	0	caterpillars	11B2	Use high rate for armyworms. Treat when larvae are young.
Deliver (Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies kurstaki)	0.25-1.5 lb	4	0	caterpillars	11B2	Use higher rates for armyworms. OMRI-listed ² .
*Diazinon AG500, 4EC, *50W (diazinon)	foliar - AG500, 4EC: 1 pt 50W: 1 lb	24	14	onion thrips	1B	Bulb and green
	preplant - AG500, 4EC: 3- 4 qts 50W: 6-8 lb	24	preplant	wireworms	1B	See label.
DiPel DF (Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies kurstaki)	0.5-2.0 lb	4	0	caterpillars	11B2	Treat when larvae are young. Good coverage is essential. OMRI-listed ² .
Entrust (spinosad)	1-2.5 oz	4	1	armyworms, dipteran leafminers, flea beetle, loopers, suppression of thrips	5	No more than 5 applications per year (9 oz product).
Extinguish ((S)-methoprene)	1-1.5 lb	4	0	fire ants	7A	Slow-acting IGR (insect growth regulator). Best applied early spring and fall where crop will be grown. Colonies will be reduced after three weeks and eliminated after 8 to 10 weeks. May be applied by ground equipment or aerially.

Table 6. Continued.

Trade Name (Common Name)	Rate (product/acre)	REI (hours)	Days to Harvest		MOA Code ¹	Notes
Javelin WG (Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies kurstaki)	0.12-1.5 lb	4	0	most caterpillars, but not Spodoptera species (armyworms)	11B2	Treat when larvae are young. Thorough coverage is essential OMRI-listed ² .
Knack (pyriproxyfen)	8 fl oz	12	3	onion thrips, western flower thrips	7D	Maximum of 2 applications, at least 14 days apart.
*Lannate LV; *SP (methomyl)	LV: 1.5-3.0 pt SP: 0.5-1.0 lb	48	7 = (dry and green)	beet armyworm, black cut- worm, thrips, variegated cutworm	1A	Add a wetting agent to improve coverage.
Lepinox WDG (Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies kurstaki)	1.0-2.0 lb	12	0	for most caterpillars, including beet armyworm (see label)	11B2	Treat when larvae are small. Thorough coverage is essential
Lorsban 15 G; 75WG (chlorpyrifos)	See labels for rates	24	at plant- ing	onion maggot	1B	Dry bulb only.
Malathion 8F (malathion)	1-2 pt	12	3	onion maggot, thrips	1B	
M-Pede 49% EC Soap, insecticidal	1-2% V/V	12	0	aphids, leafhoppers, mites, plant bugs, thrips, whiteflies		OMRI-listed ² .
*Mustang Max (zeta-cypermethrin)	2.24-4.0 oz	12	7	aphids, armyworms, cut- worms, leafminers, onion maggot adults, onion thrip, stink bugs	3	
Neemix 4.5 EC (azadirachtin)	4-16 fl oz	12	0	aphids, armyworms, cab- bage looper, cutworms, leafminers, onion maggot, thrips, whiteflies	26	OMRI-listed ² .
*Penncap-M (methyl parathion)	2 pt	4 days - See label	15	thrips	1B	Do not apply when onions are blooming and bees are foraging
*Pounce 3.2 EC (permethrin)	4-12 oz	12	1	armyworms, cutworms, leafminers, onion maggot, stink bugs, thrips	3	
Pyrellin EC (pyrethrin + rotenone)	1-2 pt	12	12 hours	aphids, leafhoppers, loop- ers, mites, plant bugs, stink bugs, thrips, white- flies	3, 21	
*Telone C-35 (dichlo- ropropene + chloro- picrin)	See label	5 days - See label	preplant	symphylans, wireworms		See supplemental label for use restrictions in south and centra Florida.
*Telone II (dichloropropene)						
Trigard (cyromazine)	2.66 oz	12	7	leafminers	17	Do not make more than 6 appli cations.
Trilogy (extract of neem oil)	0.5-2.0% V/V	4	0	aphids, mites, suppression of thrips and whiteflies	26	Apply morning or evening to reduce potential for leaf burn. Toxic to bees exposed to direct treatment. OMRI-listed ² .

Table 6. Continued.

Trade Name (Common Name)	Rate (product/acre)	REI (hours)	Days to Harvest	Insects	MOA Code ¹	Notes
*Warrior (lambda-cyhalothrin)	1.92-3.84 fl oz	24	14	aphids, armyworms, cutworms, onion maggot adults, plant bugs, stink bugs, thrips	3	For bulb crops only, not green onions. Do not apply more than 0.24 lb ai/acre per season.
Xentari DF (Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies aizawai)	0.5-2.0 lb	4	0	caterpillars	11B1	Treat when larvae are young. Thorough coverage is essential. May be used in the greenhouse. Can be used in organic production.

The pesticide information presented in this table was current with federal and state regulations at the time of revision. The user is responsible for determining the intended use is consistent with the label of the product being used. Use pesticides safely. Read and follow label instructions.

- Mode of Action codes for vegetable pest insecticides from the Insecticide Resistance Action Committee (IRAC) Mode of Action Classification v.3.3 October 2003. 1A. Acetylcholine esterase inhibitors, Carbamates 1B. Acetylcholine esterase inhibitors, Organophosphates
 - 2A. GABA-gated chloride channel antagonists
 - 3. Sodium channel modulators
 - 4A. Nicotinic Acetylcholine receptor agonists/antagonists, Neonicotinoids
 - 5. Nicotinic Acetylcholine receptor agonists (not group 4)
 - 6. Chloride channel activators
 - 7A. Juvenile hormone mimics, Juvenile hormone analogues
 - 7D. Juvenile hormone mimics, Pyriproxifen
 - 9A. Compounds of unknown or non-specific mode of action (selective feeding blockers), Cryolite
 - 9B. Compounds of unknown or non-specific mode of action (selective feeding blockers), Pymetrozine
 - 11B1. Microbial disruptors of insect midgut membranes, B.t. var aizawai
 - 11B2. Microbial disruptors of insect midgut membranes, B.t. var kurstaki
 - 12B. Inhibitors of oxidative phosphorylation, disruptors of ATP formation, Organotin miticide
 - 15. Inhibitors of chitin biosynthesis, type 0, Lepidopteran
 - 16. Inhibitors of chitin biosynthesis, type 1, Homopteran
 - 17. Inhibitors of chitin biosynthesis, type 2, Dipteran
 - 18. Ecdysone agonist/disruptor
 - 20. Site II electron transport inhibitors
 - 21. Site I electron transport inhibitors
 - 22. Voltage-dependent sodium channel blocker
 - 23. Inhibitors of lipid biosynthesis
 - 25. Neuroactive (unknown mode of action)
 - 26. Unknown mode of action, Azadirachtin

² OMRI listed: Listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute for use in organic production.

^{*} Restricted Use Only.