

In the vicinity of Chicago, which is the largest set producing section in America, the rows are one foot apart and from sixty to seventy-five pounds of seed are used per acre.

The cultivation and weeding are practically the same as for market onions. When the onions are ready to be harvested, some people use steel hooks to loosen the sets from the soil. Others use an attachment consisting of short steel blades about two inches in length. Two of these blades are used on a double wheel hoe, and the points of the blades are kept about an inch apart. The machine is pushed along by hand, with the blades deep enough in the soil so as not to hurt the onion. The onions are then picked up, with one hand grasping as many as it can conveniently hold, and as near the bulb as possible, and the other hand is then used to twist off the tops. They are then deposited in round half-bushel baskets, and when the basket is full it is taken and emptied into trays. These are three feet by four feet in size, with sides made from one inch lumber, and are three inches high, the ends of lumber of the same thickness and four inches high. They also have a four-inch piece across the bottom to give them stability. The bottoms are slatted and are made from four foot lath with a space of one-quarter to three-eighths of an inch between. Each tray holds one and one-half bushels.

These trays, when filled with onions, are piled up one on top of another in the following manner—twenty-one at the high end, twenty in the centre, and nineteen at the low end. Some boards or strips of waterproof paper are placed over the tops of the piled crates to protect the sets from the weather, and it is then known as a house. The four inch end of the trays when piled leaves an inch space at the sides of the tray for the purpose of allowing the air to enter and dry the small bulbs.

After they are thoroughly dried, they are then taken to a Clipper cleaning machine and run through that, removing all the dried top remaining on the onion as well as any dried or loose peeling. It also sorts the sets as they pass over a screen, all over three-fourths of an inch in diameter being considered too large for sets and are used for pickling onions. The sets, after coming from the machine, are boxed or barreled for delivery, or are put in storage. If put in storage for winter or spring delivery, they are placed back on the same trays and these are piled up in the storage house, which is a frost-proof building. They should be kept as dry and cool as possible, but must not be allowed to freeze.

Some of the operators in sets in the Chicago district contract with small growers to grow sets for them. The contractor furnishes the seed and the trays for curing the sets, and pays the growers seventy to eighty-five cents per bushel for growing. This must be close to the cost of production, as the contractors have hard work to increase their acreage, and in some cases to induce the grower to continue to grow sets for them.

One large firm there grows about 250 acres of sets annually, using four Planet Junior drills attached together, and drawn by a horse, for sowing their seed. They also grow forty or fifty acres of seed to furnish their supply for the following year.