ONIONS.VEGETABLES.IM

Lift, dry and store

Two official surprises: do not bend the leaves, and do not store the dried bulbs in the dark.

The Royal Horticultural Society's onion growing guide is plain about both. The official sign of maturity is yellowing and toppling of the foliage, not a bent neck.

The official step	Official wording
When to lift	"Although it's sometimes suggested to bend over the foliage or gently lift the bulbs to break the roots, this is no longer recommended." "Yellowing and toppling of the foliage is a sign that the crop is reaching maturity. Harvest before the foliage dies down completely." Lift carefully, and use damaged bulbs straight away.
How to dry	"Dry your onions for about two weeks before storing — place them in full sun outdoors on wire racks, or similar, so air can circulate beneath them." In damp weather, dry them in a greenhouse or well-ventilated shed. When the foliage is "papery and dry," use net bags or trays in a single layer, or "tie them into plaits and hang them up."
Where to store	"Keep them in a light, cool, dry and well-ventilated place — don't store in the dark, as this encourages sprouting." Autumn-planted onions store until early winter; spring-planted or seed-raised onions can last until well into the following spring. Shallots generally store for at least six to eight months, with the same warning about the dark.

A short quiz

1. Is bending the foliage still recommended?
2. For about how long should onions be dried before storing?
3. Why, officially, should they not be stored in the dark?

Answers. No — it is no longer recommended. About two weeks. Darkness encourages sprouting.

Wording from the Royal Horticultural Society, "How to grow onions" and "How to grow shallots," re-checked 18 November 2026. onions.vegetables.im is independent of the Society. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.