

Pregnant Onion



Pregnant onion



Bulbils

Ornithogalum caudatum (synonym *O. longibracteatum*) - ornitho = bird, galum = milk or eggs: the bulbs of some species resemble birds' eggs; caudatum = swollen stem: which references the swollen neck of the above ground bulb.

Hyacinthaceae - hyacinth family (formerly in the lily family)

Evergreen bulbous perennial; channeled, bright green leaves

Adult size: 36" tall, 18" width, flower stalk 60"

Dozens of fragrant flowers per inflorescence, half inch, white with a green median stripe on the petals

Mediterranean habitat, native to South Africa

Hardy to zone 9 (8 with protection or microclimate)

Full sun, well drained soil (add sand)

Typically develops into large colonies

Educational Points of Interest

- Pregnant onion exhibits rapid asexual production of bulbils (small bulbs produced above ground). Most bulbous plants produce offshoots underground at the base of the bulb. Pregnant onion produces bulbils throughout the entire surface of the above ground bulb, which gives it a “pregnant” look.
- Pregnant onion has chemical defenses against herbivory. The viscous sap has chemical compounds that deter animals and insects from eating the leaves.
- Pregnant onions have a rapid growth rate, when given bright light and ample water. Bulbils can grow into full size bulbs in a year. This is a good plant for classroom activities, because unlike most perennials, pregnant onions can reach maturity during the period of a school year. Plus pregnant onions provide plenty of stock from bulbils.
- Ease of cultivation, an interesting growth habit, and abundant asexual reproduction make pregnant onion a good item for plant sales.



Flower stalk



Bulbils bursting through tunic