
**State Government Operations &
Accountability Committee**

HB 1964

Brief Description: Designating the Walla Walla sweet onion as the official Washington state vegetable.

Sponsors: Representatives Walsh, Grant, Haler, McIntire, Conway, Hankins and Chase.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designates the Walla Walla Sweet onion as the state vegetable.
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Hearing Date: 3/23/05

Staff: Hannah Lidman (786-7291).

Background:

The onion is believed to have originated in Asia, and the ancient Egyptians worshiped the onion as a physical representation of eternity. Numerous Egyptian tombs had onions painted on the interior walls, and King Ramses was entombed with onions over his eyes.

In the late 1800s a French soldier, Peter Pieri, found a sweet onion seed on the Island of Corsica and brought it to the Walla Walla Valley. Pieri and his neighbors were impressed by the new onion's winter hardiness and began harvesting the seed. The Walla Walla Gardener's Association (a cooperative of local onion growers) was established in 1916.

Walla Walla Sweet onions are grown in Walla Walla County in southeastern Washington and a part of Umatilla County in northeastern Oregon. They are available mid-June through September.

Many states have official state fruits but only six states have official state vegetables, three of which are onions. Georgia designated the Vidalia onion as the state vegetable, Texas has the Texas Sweet onion and Utah has the Spanish Sweet onion.

Washington has a number of state symbols designated by the Legislature including a state tree, flower, grass, fruit, bird, gem, and fish.

Summary of Bill:

The Walla Walla Sweet onion is designated the official state vegetable of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.