

# Reflective Onion

*Allium cepa speculum*

Description: the bulb of the Reflective Onion greatly resembles a common onion when unpeeled. The primary difference is that the inner layers of the Reflective Onion are transparent, and indeed catch the light in a way that both sparkles, and dazzles. Reflective Onions are both nutritious and palatable to most human-variant species.

“Build an organic hand laser,” they said. “Make it so that people can grow it,” they said. “Make the four or five crops you need part of the standard planetary colonization package,” they said. And, wouldn’t you know it? They were right! It worked out fine: corn for the stock; carrot for the focusing barrel; potato for the battery; beet for the laser emitter; and a Reflective Onion as the organic focusing chamber.

The whole thing isn’t a *great* laser, mind you. You only get one shot off before the entire thing heats up, painfully; the second shot cooks all of the vegetables, and probably your hand too if you’re not careful. The range is also fairly limited.

But, oh, *my* but this was still a highly unpleasant surprise to the first space reivers who thought that the farming colony that they were raiding didn't actually have any beam weapons. Unpleasant, and terminal; the colony in question still has the reivers' starship. It's very useful for bouncing radio signals off of, not to mention the bit where its presence in orbit was an unsubtle reminder that Terran farmers aren't easier prey than any *other* kind of Terran.

Still, things are simpler and **much** more civilized, now. The wild and woolly days of the early colonization period have given way to more measured and respectable behavior. Those lurid tales of laconic vegslingers and dastardly greengrocers? They've become strictly a trashy genre fiction thing that has been romanticized and cleaned up, with all of the messy bits discreetly hidden in the ellipses.

Which makes the recent rediscovery of a bonafide, absolutely exotic, and almost painfully genuine Lost Colony such a recurring headache. Worse, it's a *big* world, well-developed, and with a population large enough to encourage the use of a light hand by the interstellar authorities. Worst of all, it seems like every damn man and woman down there is packing vitamin. And, of course: the locals can get real touchy when they think

people from the stars are looking down their noses at them.

Well, that's why you're being paid top credit to nursemaid an entire tour ship full of greenthumbs.

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