

Growing Garlic

Planting, Care Tips & Varieties

If you love garlic, it makes sense to grow your own. Not only is garlic easy to grow, but you can easily grow enough to allow you to indulge amply, and cheaply, in this culinary delight for many months!



Soil Preparation:

Well-drained, fertile soil is important for nice bulb production. If you have compacted clay soil, work a lot of compost into the bed before planting.

How To Plant:

Garlic is typically planted in early October. In our area, plant 4-6 weeks before the ground freezes. This gives the plant time to make good root development before the cold hits, but not enough time to grow leaves. Break the bulb into cloves. Large cloves usually result in the largest bulbs. Where winters are mild, plant the cloves 1-2" deep with the root side down. Where winters are severe, plant cloves 2-4" deep & mulch lightly immediately after planting. Minimum spacing is 4" apart in rows 8" apart. To grow the largest bulbs, space plants 6 inches apart in rows 12" apart. Bulbs will start growing rapidly in the spring, maturing in the summer. Rotate the location of your garlic crop every two to three years to avoid build up of soil borne diseases.

Maintenance:

Keep area well weeded. Pull weeds when they are small to avoid damaging shallow roots. Once garlic begins to grow in the spring, it needs to be moderately fertilized. Apply foliar fertilizer every ten days to two weeks. Nitrogen is garlic's major nutrient requirement. Stop fertilizing when the foliage stops growing, as it is useless and can even hurt the quality of the bulbs. Water regularly when plants start growing green leaves. Once the garlic stops putting on new foliar growth, ease back on your watering. Topsoil should not be wet for any length of

time as this causes bulbs to mold. Garlic bulbs begin to form once summer begins and no new leaves are growing. Flower stalks emerge in early June. Cut the stalks off as soon as they reaches 8-9" tall. This redirects energy down to the bulb.

Harvesting:

Harvesting at the right time is a crucial step in producing quality garlic. As the bulbs mature, the leaves will begin to turn brown. Garlic is ready to harvest when two-thirds of the leaves are brown. If you loosen soil around the roots with a spading fork, you should be able to pull up the garlic by hand.

Curing:

Tie leaves or stalks in loose bundles of 8-12 plants & hang under a covered area. Garlic stores longer if cured with stalks or leaves attached. Good air circulation is essential. Curing takes 2-3 weeks & as long as 2 months depending on the humidity & air circulation. Fans & heat can be used in wet climates. Once curing is complete, you can trim the roots. If storing garlic in sacks, cut the stalks off ½ inch above the bulb & gently clean the bulb with a soft bristle brush. Avoid stripping off the papery skin.

Storing:

Hang garlic in netted sacks for air circulation on all sides. Perfect storing conditions are at room temperature. If the temperature is between 42-52 degrees Fahrenheit, the garlic will actually start sprouting.

Garlic Varieties

Early Italian Purple:

Early season. Produces 12-15 cloves per head. Nice flavored garlic, great for cooking. Large bulbs with white skin and purple stripes. Vigorous plant adapts well to summer heat. Ideal for braiding and hanging.

Elephant:

These large garlic bulbs are perfect for baking, and for a wide variety of culinary uses. Although elephant garlic is technically a leek rather than a true garlic, many garlic lovers prize it for the mellower, sweeter taste. Convenient for easy processing in your pesto or sauce projects, and for large chunks in dishes.

German Red:

Hardneck. Early to mid-season variety. Produces 8-12 large cloves per head. Strong, hot, spicy flavored garlic. Large bright purple bulb with light brown cloves. Stores well for 4-6 months. Easy to peel.

MexicanViolette:

Hardneck. This garlic tends to have a hotter flavor than other varieties but can become more mild if baked. Bulbs tend to have a silvery skin with deep purple stripes, however the richness of the purple color is determined by weather and water.

Italian Late:

Mid-season variety. Averages 7 large cloves per head. One of the best tasting, most pungent cooking types. Tight, light colored wrappers and purple cloves. Stores well for 6-9 months. Excellent variety for braiding.

Nootka Rose:

Softneck, silverskin type garlic variety. Originally from the San Juan Islands in Washington State. Cloves streaked red on mahogany background, strong tasting, long storing garlic. Excellent storability.

Silver Rose:

Silver Rose is a softneck of the silverskin variety. It typically has 8-12 cloves per head. This garlic is great for braiding and it stores well, up to a year in perfect conditions. It is a bit milder than the hardnecks and is a great producer.

Spanish Roja:

Best known hardneck garlic in America. The large, flat bottomed, purple streaked bulbs peels easily and stores up to 4-6 months. Produces several very large cloves with each bulb. This heirloom garlic, came to Oregon over a 100 years ago. Flavor is very strong, spicy, with a deep, rich, complex flavor. Described as the most piquant garlic in the world.

