

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 and mulch lightly immediately after planting. Minimum spacing is 4" apart in rows 8" apart. To grow the largest bulbs, space plants 6" 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 reach 8-9" tall. This redirects the 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 and 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 and as long as 2 months depending on the humidity and air circulation. Fans and 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 1/2 inch above the bulb and 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 Variety descriptions other side.



2023 Garlic Varieties

California Early:

SOFTNECK. Early season. It is one of the most commonly grown varieties in the Pacific Northwest. Produces 10-16 cloves per head. Known for a good, mild flavor. Medium heads are off-white with a purple blush. Great for braiding as well as early harvesting for green garlic. Stores up to 6 months.

Chesnok Red:

HARDNECK. Mid-season. One of the most colorful varieties having reddish-purple, stripey skin. Yields heavily and has 6-10 easy-to-peel cloves per head. Flavor is well-balanced and can be eaten raw but when cooked it becomes gentle, earthy and rich with touches of heat and sweetness. Stores up to 4-6 months.

Early Italian Purple:

SOFTNECK. Early season. Produces 12-15 cloves per head. Nicely flavored, great for cooking. Large bulbs with white skin and purple stripes. Vigorous plant adapts well to summer heat. Stores very well, up to 9-12 months. Ideal for braiding and hanging.

Elephant:

These large bulbs are perfect for baking and have a wide variety of culinary uses. Convenient for easy processing in pesto, sauce projects, and large chunks in dishes. Not a true garlic and is more closely related to a leek. Prized for the mellower, sweeter, onion-like taste. Stores up to 4-6 months.

German Porcelain:

HARDNECK. Mid-season. Does well in any climate and produces very large bulbs that contain 4-6 cloves per head. The white exterior is embellished with delicate purple stripes. Has a great, bold flavor and is easy to peel. Stores up to six months.

German Red:

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

Inchelium Red:

SOFTNECK. Mid-season. A national taste-test winner in the softneck division. This mild-flavored garlic is great for baking and has a classic taste. Large heads can be double layered and have 8-20 cloves a piece. Stores well for 6-9 months.

Italian Late:

SOFTNECK. Mid-season. 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. Mid- to late season. Silverskin type. Cloves are streaked red on mahogany background, making it an attractive choice for braiding. Strong tasting and averages 12-20 layered cloves per head. One of longest-storing cultivars, up to a year.

Russian Red:

HARDNECK. Mid-season. This flavor-forward variety is great for many culinary uses. Great producer and the large, blushed and purple-stripped heads have 6 to 8 easy-to-peel cloves. Spicy, strong flavor gets a subtly sweet aftertaste once cooked. Stores up to 6-8 months.

Silver Rose:

SOFTNECK. Late season. Silverskin type. 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:

HARDNECK. Mid- to late season. The large, flat-bottomed, purple-streaked bulbs peel easily and store up to 4-6 months. Produces 8-12 cloves per head. Said to be the most piquant garlic in the world; boasts a very strong, spicy flavor with a deep, rich complexity.

