



How to Grow Garlic



WHEN TO PLANT: Garlic sprouts in autumn. It survives cold winters as an underground plant, resumes rapid growth when the weather warms in spring, and bulbs in summer.

Where winters are milder, garlic is planted from October through January.

SOIL PREPERATION: Garlic can survive in poor soil so long as it does not become waterlogged. But to make nice bulbs, garlic needs fertile soil with lots of organic matter. Bulbs must be dug cleanly, so make sure the soil is not compacted through the long growing season. Growers with clay soils should add a lot of compost before planting such as E.B. Stone Planting Compost or Espoma Mushroom Compost.

Those blessed with lighter soils having naturally loose texture need add only small amounts of organic matter, or grow and till in green manures prior to planting.

HOW TO PLANT: Break the bulb into individual cloves. There will be a mixture of large and small cloves. Small doves usually grow small bulbs, so plant only the larger ones. Use the small cloves in the kitchen. Where winter is mild, plant cloves one inch deep. Be sure to add bone meal or bulb food when planting. Mulch lightly immediately after plating. In spring the garlic will have no trouble pushing through an inch of mulch. Minimum spacing on raised beds is four to eight inches. To grow the largest bulbs, try spacing your plants six to twelve inches.

GROWING: Most of the work comes after garlic has overwintered. It must be kept well weeded. Take care not to damage the shallow roots when cultivating. Garlic needs to be moderately fertilized every other week with high nitrogen fertilizer as soon as it begins growing in the spring. Organic gardeners can side dress a little chicken manure or sprinkle one half to one gallon of seed meal (cottonseed, canola, linseed, soymeal) alongside each 50 row feet. While the plant is rapidly growing new leaves, keep the soil moist as you would for any other leafy green like lettuce or spinach. When summer arrives garlic stops making new leaves and starts forming bulbs. Do not fertilize once bulbing begins.

SEED STALKS: Hard-neck varieties put up a tall, woody flowering stalk that usually grows bulblets at the top. But if the plant is allowed to put its energy into these "seeds" the bulb forming below ground will end up smaller. So cut seed stalks off as soon as the flower head has reached eight to nine inches tall. Soft-neck varieties do not produce a flower stalk.

HARVEST: Gauging the right time to harvest is very important. Dug too soon, the skins will not have formed around each clove. Hard-neck bulbs, if dug too late, may have begun to spread apart in the soil. As the bulbs mature the leaves brown off. When there are still five or six green leaves remaining on the plant, dig and examine a plant every few days to check the bulb. In very good garlic ground (very fluffy soil) the plants might be pulled by hand, but it is usually better to loosen the soil first with a spading fork. Immediately brush off the soil from around the roots but do this gently. Drying is the essential part of curing the bulbs so do not wash them in water. Immediately move the newly dug garlic out of direct sun to dry. Soft-neck varieties can be braided and stored for later use.



VALLEY NURSERY, INC.
Great Plants • Great People

Poulsbo, WA 98370
360-779-3806

www.valleynurseryinc.com