

How do I grow Garlic?

PLANTING



The best time to plant garlic in the Madison area is in October after the first frost. However, it can be planted anytime from September to November.

- 1 Plant your garlic in a loose, rich soil with lots of organic matter. Dig in an inch or two of compost if your soil isn't ideal. An application of organic granular bulb or vegetable food can be beneficial as well.
- 2 Do not pull apart the bulbs until it is time to plant. At planting, separate the individual cloves from the bulb. Do not remove the clove skins. The largest cloves will produce the largest bulbs.
- 3 Plant each clove 2 inches below the soil, 6 to 8 inches apart. After planting, mark the row/bed and cover with 6 inches of loose straw.
- 4 If the weather is warm, you may see some growth begin in the fall. Don't worry, as the plants are very hardy and will survive the cold.

GROWING



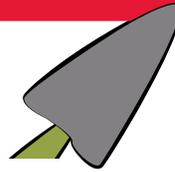
The garlic will begin to grow very early in the spring. After the soil thaws, make sure that your plants receive about an inch of water a week. Stop watering after June 1st, as this helps the bulbs to mature and makes harvesting easier.

You may apply a light foliar feed to your plants once or twice before May 15th, but do not feed after this time, as it will interfere with bulb production.

Keep your garlic weeded, as it does not compete well with other plants.

Hardneck garlic varieties will produce scapes, which are curly stems that form on the tops of the plants. Cut the scapes when they are eight to ten inches long. This allows the plant to put more energy into bulb production. The scapes are delicious, and can be used much the same way as scallions in recipes. They also make an excellent pesto.

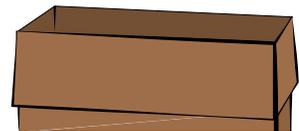
HARVEST



Keep a close eye on your plants when they begin to dry back. You want to harvest the plants when they are drying but still have 4 or 5 green leaves left. This usually takes place in June or early July. Don't wait too long, or the bulbs will fall apart in the ground.

- 1 When harvesting, carefully dig the whole plant out of the ground without pulling on the stems or bruising the bulbs. They bruise easily at this point and this causes premature rotting.
- 2 Lightly brush loose dirt off the bulbs, and remove them from sunlight immediately. Tie them in bunches of six to ten plants, and hang them to dry in a dark, well-ventilated space such as a shed or garage. Let them hang to dry for 3 to 6 weeks.
- 3 After drying, the bulbs may be cleaned before storing. Trim off the roots, and trim the tops to 1-2 inches. Carefully rub the outer layer of skin off along with any remaining soil.

STORAGE & USE



Store your garlic in a dark place in a breathable bag or basket. Onion net bags work well. Ideal storage temperature is between 50 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit, and humidity around 50%. Never keep garlic in the refrigerator!

The largest bulbs can be replanted in the fall.

To get the longest storage out of your garlic, use the bulbs in this order: first the Hardneck varieties, from largest to smallest, second the Softneck varieties, from largest to smallest. In general, Softnecks store longer than Hardnecks, and smaller bulbs store longer than larger bulbs.