

Garlic

There are two basic classes of garlic: hardneck and softneck. Softneck varieties store very well, are braidable and easy to grow. The hardnecks have larger, spicier cloves and are easier to peel than softnecks.

- PLANTING:** Best planted in Oct.-Jan, or in Spring. Separate cloves of garlic just prior to planting. Plant only the larger cloves and use the small ones in the kitchen. Plant cloves 1" deep, root side down. Space plants 6" apart x 12".
- CULTURE:** Full sun. Well drained, light, loamy soil, rich in organic matter and plant nutrients. Keep soil moist while the plant is growing new leaves.
- GROWING:** Keep well weeded, being careful not to damage the shallow roots. Side-dress closely to bulbs in the spring with chicken manure or seedmeal (cottonseed meal, canola meal, linseed, soybean, etc.) at a rate of about 2-3 Tblsp. per 5 row-feet or ½ to 1 gallon per 50 row feet. The plants also like foliar-sprayed fertilizer every 10-14 days, but remember: nitrogen is garlic's major requirement. When summer arrives, garlic stops making new leaves and starts forming bulbs. Once bulbing begins, fertilizing is useless and water should be less and less frequent as harvest time approaches.
- “Hardneck” varieties put up a tall, woody, flowering stalk that usually grows bulblets at top. CUT SEED STALKS OFF as soon as the flower head has reached 8-9" tall, this will redirect energy to the bulb.
- HARVESTING:** As the bulbs mature, the leaves brown off. When there are still 5 or 6 green leaves left on the plant, dig and examine a plant every few days to check the bulb. In very good garlic ground (fluffy, light) the plants might be pulled by hand, but it is best to loosen soil first with a spading fork. Immediately brush off the soil from around the roots, very gently. Drying is the essential part of curing the bulbs so do not wash in water. Move newly dug garlic out of direct sunlight.
- CURING:** For longer storage cure garlic with stalk or leaves attached. Plants can be tied by their leaves or stalks in loose bundles of 8-12 plants and hung under cover. Or, spread the plants in single layers on screens, drying racks, or slatted shelves. Good air circulation is essential. Cure from 3 weeks to 2 months. After curing trim the roots.
- STORING:** Hang garlic in netted sacks, so there is air circulation on all sides. Hang the dried bunches, or make and hang braids of the “softneck” types. Perfect storage conditions are 45-55°F at 50% relative humidity. Keeping garlic below 40°F actually makes it sprout.