

# GARLIC



Try to buy seed garlic (bulbs) that is locally grown because it will be better adapted to our soils and climate. Look for it early in the fall, but you'll want to wait until about Halloween or later to plant it. Store the bulbs in a cool, dry place until it's time to plant.

## ENJOYING THE BULBS

Growing your own garlic will provide better tasting bulbs that you can use fresh in August and September, which is a totally different experience than cooking with the cured bulbs you find at the market.

Garlic has myriad health benefits. The National Institutes of Health has documented its benefits for cancer, cardiac disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and bone and skin diseases. This wonder bulb is an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anticarcinogenic, and antitumorogenic. It also has glucose- and cholesterol- lowering properties.

Plus, it provides amazing depth of flavor to everything you use it in.



## CHOOSING A SITE

Choose a location that has *at least* 8 hours of sun a day. Garlic needs full sun.

Use crop rotation and don't plant in the same place you planted last year. Wait 3 years before planting in the same place. This will help prevent the spread of disease.

## PLANTING

Garlic loves well-drained, sandy loam, so prepare your soil by loosening it (not turning it) with a fork down to 8–10 inches. Add 1–2 inches of compost, lime if a soil test calls for it, an organic slow-release fertilizer like Pro-Gro, bone meal (1 cup per 100 square feet), and wood ash if available (1 cup per 100 square feet). Rake these additions lightly into the soil.

Crack open your bulbs and separate the cloves no more than 24 hours before planting time.

Make lines in your prepared soil that are 4–6 inches apart in a grid pattern. Plant the cloves pointy side up in each intersection of the grid. Pat down the soil so you get good bulb-to-soil contact.

Set up your dripline irrigation or soaker hose now so it's under your mulch and ready to go in the spring. You may see some green growth in the fall, but hopefully not too much. You want good root development before the ground freezes, but minimal top growth.

Cover the planting bed with a thick layer (6 inches) of straw and chopped leaves soon after you plant. The straw will prevent the soil from thawing out and heaving the bulbs up out of the soil.

## TAKING CARE: WATERING, FEEDING, PRUNING

In the spring, leave on the straw to keep moisture in the soil and reduce weeds, as long as the garlic growth is making its way through.

Water 1–2 inches each week that there isn't adequate rain during the growing season. Maintain an even amount of soil moisture.

You incorporated minerals and compost at planting time, so most of your nutrients will be available for your plants to uptake as needed. It is best to also foliar feed with compost tea or comfrey tea every two weeks until the plant flowers.

In mid-June, you'll notice a long, thin flower shooting up above the plant (see photo at bottom left). This is the scape, which should be cut off once it has formed a curlicue. You can use the scape to make pesto or use it as you would a scallion in other dishes (see recipe below).

Stop watering about 2–3 weeks before harvest (usually in mid-July).

### AVOIDING PESTS AND DISEASE

Starting with clean bulbs and practicing crop rotation are important to avoid diseases. Maintaining good air circulation is also paramount. Make sure you have plenty of room between beds so air circulates freely.

### HARVESTING

Harvest your garlic when about half the foliage has turned brown, usually in late July or early August. Pull the whole plant out of the ground. You can use the garlic right away or cure it.

To cure, hang the plants upright, with all the foliage and roots attached, in bunches of 5–10 in a cool, dry place with good ventilation and out of the sun. Curing takes about 2–3 weeks, depending on the temperature and humidity. When the curing is complete, all the foliage will be brown, withered, and crunchy. At that point, lop off the roots and tops. Save 20% of the garlic bulbs for next year's planting; save your biggest ones for planting—large cloves are more important than large bulbs when you're sorting through them.

Store whole garlic bulbs at 50°–70°F and in 50%–60% humidity for later use.

### Garlic Scape Pesto

- 6 garlic scapes, roughly chopped (about 1/2 cup)
- 1/8 cup walnuts, roughly chopped
- 1/8 cup olive oil, or as needed
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/8 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- Freshly ground pepper and salt

*Put the scapes and walnuts in a food processor (or blender) and pulse to break them up. With the motor still running, gradually add the olive oil and lemon juice until the mixture is smooth; add more olive oil if needed for a good consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste and the cheese. Put on crackers or mix with pasta. Yum! Can be frozen in ice cube trays, popped out to store in containers, and brought out for those winter meals that need a splash of summer. Makes ½ cup.*

