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Garlic Growing Guide

Plant from September 15 to November 30. Optimum time is October after the first light frost.

- Garlic is a heavy feeder and likes a soil with a pH of about 6.5, loose and rich with lots of organic matter to provide good drainage.
- Plant the largest cloves to grow the largest bulbs. Leave the outer skin on the bulbs and do not separate the cloves from the bulb until you are ready to plant.
- Plant the cloves root end down, pointed end up, 6-8" apart. Cover with 2" of soil and a 6" layer of mulch (grass clippings mixed with leaves, straw, prairie hay or alfalfa hay). Do not remove mulch in the spring; it helps control weeds, preserve moisture and provides nutrients as it decomposes.
- Cloves will begin to sprout through the mulch in 4-8 weeks, depending upon the variety and the weather conditions. Do not be concerned. The plants may suffer frost or a small freeze and will survive the weather.
- Garlic will begin to emerge in early spring. A foliar application of fertilizer or two is beneficial up to May 15. Do not fertilize after May 15 as this is detrimental.
- Garlic needs about 1" of water per week during the growing season. Cease all watering about June 1; this allows the bulbs to form better and harvest more easily.
- Keep weeds under control early. Garlic does not compete well with weeds.

- "Scapes" are the curly stems that often form as the garlic matures. Cut or break them off after they are 10" long – they will inhibit bulb growth if allowed to grow, and they are good in soups and stir fries.
- Harvest after leaf die-back begins and there are still five green leaves remaining on the plant – sometime in June or early July depending upon the year and your climate. Do not wait too long or the bulbs will begin to separate in the ground.
- Dig the garlic carefully, do not pull the stalk or it will separate from the bulb. Gently brush most of the dirt off – do not wash. Be careful not to bang the garlic against a hard object or each other. It will bruise. Remove from the sun immediately.
- Tie in a bundle of 6-10 and hang in a shaded, dry, wellventilated shed or garage. Leave hanging for 4-6 weeks.
- After thoroughly drying, trim off the roots and cut the stalks off about 1 1/2 inches above the bulb. Store in net bags – old onion bags are good. For optimum storage, hang in an area with 45-55 percent humidity and a temperature of 50-70 degrees. Do not refrigerate.
- At all stages handle your garlic carefully. It is alive! Bruise it and it will not keep.
- Hold back your nicest bulbs for replanting.
- Good Luck!