

GROWING GARLIC IN YOUR GARDEN

THE SOIL

Garlic prefers rich, well-cultivated soil with good drainage. Light soil will allow the clove to uniformly bulb out; heavier soils may cause irregular shapes. You may improve heavy soil by digging in a few shovelfuls of sand, vermiculite and composted manure along the planned garlic bed. To help your garlic's growth, an all-purpose garden fertilizer may be dug into the soil before planting or add it as side dressing right after planting. (Keep fertilizer 10-15 cm (4-6 ins.) away from the planted cloves). Side dressing the plants with fertilizer 1 or 2 times during the growing season will also help the bulb's development. Well rotted organic fertilizer is also excellent, but should be dug into the soil in the Fall. This improves soil conditions for the following Spring's planting.

PLANTING

Garlic prefers a cold shock to germinate. Planted too late, the cloves may not develop into mature bulbs. Plant very early in Spring, as soon as the ground can be worked. Break up the bulbs into individual cloves just before planting. All of the cloves may be planted. The larger outside cloves will often mature into the largest bulbs. Planting the smaller cloves from the inside of the bulb may result in small size bulbs or single firm cloves. They are just as flavourful as full bulbs, so if your garden has the room, don't waste a single clove! They should however, be used first as they will not store as long as a fully developed bulb. Plant in a very sunny location. Plant the cloves with the **BASE DOWNWARDS** about 25 mm (1 inch) deep and 10 cm (4 inches) apart. Keep rows about 38 cm (15 inches) apart. To make maximum use of your garden space, garlic may also be planted in multiple rows, spacing each clove 10 cm (4 inches) apart in every direction.

PLANT CARE

Water moderately on a regular basis. Garlic does not like long dry spells, and overwatering may cause the plant to develop a thick neck which will shorten its storage life. As garlic is shallow rooted, avoid working the soil too deeply. As garlic grows, the leaf tips will turn brown. This process is a guide to the bulb's maturity. By the end of the summer, 1/2 to 3/4 of the leaves will have turned brown. Stop fertilizing and watering during this last stage of development.

HARVESTING

The garlic bulbs are ready to be pulled after the leafy tops have died and have started to fall over. Towards the end of summer in some regions, it will be necessary to bend the tops or tie them in knots to accelerate bulb formation. After harvesting spread out the garlic in the sun to dry for about a week. Keep away from rain or dew. Bulbs are well dried and ready for storage, when the outer skin and stem are dry and paper-like.

STORAGE

Garlic should always be stored away from the sun, where it is cool and well ventilated. Store in open mesh bags, or bunch and braid the tops and hang them up in a dark location. Avoid storing in plastic wrappers; this encourages moisture condensation and reduces garlic's storage life considerably. A brown paper bag in a cupboard is an excellent kitchen storage spot.