

Garlic: A Growing Guide

<http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/garlic-growing-guide>



Soil preparation: Garlic will tolerate some shade but prefers full sun. While I've seen cloves sprout in gravel pits, garlic responds best in well-drained, rich, loamy soil amended with lots of organic matter. Raised beds are ideal, except in very dry regions.

Planting: To grow garlic, you plant the *cloves*, the sections of the *bulb*; each clove will produce a new bulb. The largest cloves generally yield the biggest bulbs. To get the cloves off to a strong start and protect them from fungal diseases, soak them in a jar of water containing one heaping tablespoon of baking soda and a tablespoon of liquid seaweed for a few hours before planting. Plant garlic in the fall.

Spacing: Place cloves in a hole or furrow with the flat or root end down and pointed end up, with each tip 2 inches beneath the soil. Set the cloves about 6 to 8

inches apart. Top the soil with 6 inches of mulch, such as straw or dried grass clippings mixed with leaves. You'll see shoots start growing right through the mulch in four to eight weeks, depending on your weather and the variety you've planted. They stop growing during winter, then start again in spring. Leave the mulch in place into spring; it conserves moisture and suppresses weeds (garlic competes poorly with weeds).

Watering: Garlic needs about an inch of water each week during spring growth. If you have to augment rainfall with the garden hose, stop watering by June 1 or when the leaves begin to yellow in order to let the bulbs firm up.

Scape Sacrifice: By mid-June, your garlic will begin sprouting flowery tops that curl as they mature and ultimately straighten out into long spiky tendrils. These savory stalks, known as scapes, should be removed to encourage larger, more efficient bulb growth. However, before adding severed scapes to the compost pile, try incorporating their mild garlic flavor into a delicious scape pesto, scape dip, or scape soup.

Fertilizing: Start foliar-feeding your garlic every two weeks as soon as leaf growth begins in spring (typically in March) and continue until around May 15, at which point the bulbs begin to form, says Darrell Merrell, host of the "Garlic Is Life" Festival in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Merrell uses 1 tablespoon liquid seaweed mix and 1 tablespoon fish emulsion mixed into a gallon of water.

Harvesting Hints

When half to three-quarters of the leaves turn yellow-brown, typically in late June or early July (depending on the variety and the weather), it's harvest time. Carefully dig up each bulb; do not pull, or you may break the stalk from the bulb, which can cause it to rot. Once it's harvested, get it out of the sun as soon as possible.

Tie the garlic together in bundles of 6 to 10 bulbs (label them if you've grown more than one variety) and hang them to cure for about four to six weeks in a shaded, dry, and preferably drafty area.

When your garlic is thoroughly dry, trim the roots, taking care not to knock off the outer skin. Cut off the stalks about 1½ inches above the bulb if you plan to keep the garlic in bags. Recycled mesh onion bags are perfect for storage.