



Nature & Nurture Seeds' Guide to Growing & Using Garlic

Grow Your Own Garlic (GYOG)!

As one of the most popular seasonings (or for just simply roasting and eating whole, for all you garlic lovers out there!), we believe that garlic should be an essential crop in every garden. Garlic has a rich history, and according to much historical evidence, has been cultivated by humans for over 5,000 years. Although it is believed to have originated in Central Asia, through the ages, garlic has gained popularity and has become a staple in many cuisines around the world. Get to know garlic better by growing it yourself!

Why Grow Garlic?

1. It's easy!
2. Garlic is good for you! It's medicinal and full of nutrients.
3. Grow more interesting tasting garlic varieties than the garlic found in stores. Grow your own hardneck types and you also get yummy garlic scapes to eat!
4. It's so versatile and is used in many cuisines around the world. Get creative in the kitchen!
5. It's super easy to save seed from, so that you can keep growing garlic year after year.

Types of Garlic

Hardneck varieties can be identified by their stiff stem. They are celebrated for their large cloves and intricate flavors but you will want to eat them first because they don't store long into the winter like softneck types. The hard stem will become "garlic scapes" which are typically removed and used in the kitchen. With their mild garlic flavor we love to freeze them and use them in stir fries or as a main ingredient in pesto.



Softneck varieties of garlic develop a more pliable stem. Softneck varieties tend to be spicier and have smaller cloves than hardneck types but they generally last longer in storage and are a little easier to grow. These are best for making garlic braids (see photo of intern Maya showing off her garlic braid!).

Elephant Garlic is not technically garlic but it is true to its name - bulbs can weigh up to 1 pound apiece. Elephant Garlic is a different plant species than garlic - it is more closely related to leek which is why it has a much milder (some would say boring) flavor than true garlic (hard/softneck types). But, even so, you still grow and use it like garlic.

Planting Garlic

1. **Planting:** Plant cloves as garlic rarely makes true “seeds”. Garlic is planted in the fall, after the first light frost but before the ground freezes, usually in late October or November. Overwintering (exposure to cold) is essential for bulb development so container growing and indoor growing are not recommended. To plant your garlic:
 - a. Keep bulbs intact until you are ready to plant them, then break up into individual cloves leaving clove skins intact.
 - b. Plant cloves about 2” deep into the soil, 6-8” apart in rows spaced 12” apart.
 - c. The tapered end of the clove should point up, and the flatter end with the attachment point should point down.
2. **Soil:** Garlic is a heavy feeder, so plant in fertile, well-drained soil rich in organic matter and nutrients. Covering the soil with a light layer of mulch (straw, oak leaves) helps suppress weeds, retain moisture, and fertilizes the soil. Do not remove the mulch in the spring. Cut or remove the weeds a few times in the spring and summer, as garlic does not compete well against weeds.
3. **Light:** Plant garlic in full sun.
4. **Water:** Garlic will benefit from regular watering (at least 1” of water per week). However, do avoid excessive standing moisture in your garlic bed to prevent disease and rot issues.

Garlic in the Spring/Early Summer

Hardneck garlic will produce **scapes**, which are edible flowering stems that develop in early summer. Break off the scapes and use as you would a vegetable. Breaking off the scapes will help increase your bulb yield, because all the plant’s energy will go into bulb growth instead of into scape production.

Check out our delicious [Garlic Es\(scape\) Pesto recipe!](#)

When to Harvest

1. Harvest the bulbs when the lower 4-6 leaves of the garlic plants are yellow/brown (sometime in July). Choose a day to harvest when the plant’s leaves are not wet from rain.
 - a. Loosen the soil with a digging fork and carefully lift the bulb out of the soil.
 - b. Carefully brush off excess dirt.

Curing and Storing Garlic

1. After carefully brushing off excess dirt from the bulbs, hang garlic or lay out on raised screens in well-ventilated area away from sunlight, to cure for about 10-14 days.
2. Garlic dries most quickly in areas that are dry, warm, and have plenty of airflow.
3. After curing, the outer skin should be crispy-dry, and the cut stem should be hard. Trim off roots and cut stems to about 1" above bulb. Garlic is best stored at 50-70°F, at around 50% humidity.



Seed Saving Instructions

1. Save the biggest bulbs for planting stock for next season.
2. Keep bulbs cool, dark, and dry until ready to plant (but not in the fridge because this can make them start to sprout).
3. Don't have enough cloves to plant? You can leave scapes on plants during the summer so that they can form bulbils, which can be collected and planted like seeds.
 - During the first growing season, planted bulbils will grow into single cloves, which can be dug up and re-planted to produce full bulbs the following year.

Happy Growing!

