

GROWING GARLIC

We love our garlic. Garlic is a common seasoning worldwide and it's not hard to understand why as the smell of garlic cooking makes almost any meal seem better.

Growing your own garlic is pretty simple. First you need to select your bulbs. It's good to start your search early so you can find the largest and firmest bulbs for planting. OSU recommends several varieties: German Red, Spanish Roja, Inchelium Red and Silver Skin.

Now is a good time to plant your garlic. The two most important elements that you will need to consider are sun and soil. An area that receives full sun is best. And, the soil needs good drainage. Loose, loamy soil will give you good drainage and allow the bulbs to expand as they grow. Before planting you may want to work an organic nitrogen rich fertilizer into the soil such as blood meal.

Garlic grows from the individual cloves that make up the garlic bulb. You will want to select the largest outside cloves for planting. If your soil is loose enough you should be able to just push the clove into the soil, root or flat end down. Plant the cloves about two inches deep with the pointy tip up. You should allow 4 – 6 inches between cloves for good bulb growth.

Unlike many veggies that have specific space requirements, garlic takes up very little space. And it's not a requirement that you have a veggie patch, garlic can be right at home in the flower garden. After planting, a healthy layer of mulch like straw, leaves, or dry grass clippings will help maintain soil temperatures and control weeds.

The fall growing season will produce some small shoots but is primarily for root production. Bulbs will rest over winter in preparation for a spring growth spurt. During this growth period additional watering may be indicated if rainfall is not sufficient.

In late June or early July leaves should start turning yellow brown, indicating it's time to harvest. Gently dig bulbs from the ground. Bulbs will need to be cured in a dry shaded area for 4 – 6 weeks. After drying carefully remove the stalks leaving the outer skin intact. Carefully stored garlic can last up to several months and it will likely taste better since you grew it yourself!