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Growing, Harvesting, and Curing Garlic

Garlic is one of the easiest and most rewarding crops for gardeners to grow requiring little care. There are two main types of garlic: *hardneck* and *softneck*. The “neck” refers to the flower stalk that grows from the garlic bulb. Each type has many different varieties to choose from.

Hardneck garlic varieties have fewer cloves per head and are typically smaller. Stalk grows into a *scape* in spring, which should be cut off so plant puts its energy into the bulb. Cook your edible Garlic *scapes*.

Softneck garlic varieties typically found in a grocery store. Heads are larger, with more cloves, longer shelf life. Hardneck varieties are better where winters are harsh, softnecks better in milder climates.

Planting and Growing Garlic Garlic is the last crop planted in the fall about 4 weeks before the ground freezes and can also be planted in January or February. Garlic likes rich, loose soil. Prepare the bed before planting by raking a couple inches of compost and organic fertilizer like bone meal or “starter” into the top few inches of soil. A few days before planting, separate seed heads into individual cloves – there is no need to peel. Each clove will grow into a whole new head.

Push the cloves about 2” into the ground, blunt end down, with 4” between each clove. Rows should be spaced 8”-12” apart. After planting, water well. A couple weeks after planting, mulch with a 4 to 6 inch layer of straw or shredded leaves. The mulch not only protects the garlic from freezing temperatures, but it also holds in moisture and cuts down on weeds. **Companion Plants:** Things That Grow Well with Garlic: Peppers, Tomatoes, Carrots, Beets

Harvesting and Curing Garlic Garlic takes 9 months to be ready for harvest in early to mid-summer, when about 1/3 of the leaves have died. Loosen the soil with a large garden fork and gently pull up the heads.

Plant in Fall (Sept-Nov) = Harvest in mid-Summer (June-Aug)

Plant in Winter (Jan/Feb) = Harvest in Fall (Oct/Nov)

Cure garlic for a few weeks in a warm, dry place with good airflow: a shed or covered porch is ideal. Garlic can be hung from rafters or laid out on a rack. Once cured, brush off the dirt and trim the stems. Store garlic long term in a mesh bag, cardboard box, or other breathable containers to enjoy all winter.

Killarney Reds- Hardneck- strong and nutty flavor, does well in wet climates.

Musik- Hardneck- rich, aromatic, full flavored. One of the best and most popular varieties.

Nootka Rose- Softneck- Heirloom- rich, strong flavor, rose streaked bulbs. From Puget Sound area. Good for braiding and does well in most climates. Medium head has many cloves.

Svea- Hardneck- rich & complex, purple marble stripes. Skin easy to peel. Does well in harsh climates.

Reference: <https://www.kelloggarden.com/blog/growing/growing-harvesting-and-preserving-garlic/>