



GARLIC

PUTS FALL GUSTO IN YOUR GARDEN, SUMMER ZEST IN KITCHEN

Easy to grow, garlic is one of the few vegetables planted in fall

By Vicki Hayman

The culturally diverse diets of Americans today have made garlic an increasingly popular crop for gardeners. The good news is that garlic is easy to grow and can be grown in most areas in Wyoming!

Types of Garlic

Most of us only know the supermarket variety, which is a softneck garlic grown for shipping qualities rather than its range of flavor. Softnecks are best grown in a milder climate. Softneck garlic doesn't form scapes (flower stalks), matures quickly, and generally forms several small cloves per bulb. The cloves are harder to peel than hardneck garlic.

Hardneck garlic varieties do best where winters are cold, spring is damp and cool, and summer is dry and warm. Hardneck varieties produce larger bulbs with fewer cloves than softneck varieties and produce a scape. The scape will go on to produce bulblets at its tip if not removed.

Planting Garlic

Find premium garlic bulbs at local garden centers or purchase from a local grower, garden catalog, or on-line. The recommended planting time for colder regions is in the fall four to six weeks before the first frost date.

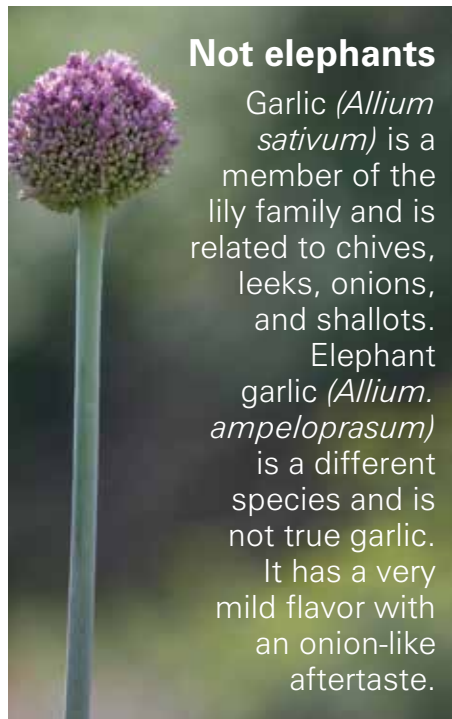
Garlic likes fertile soil and a sunny location. Poorer soils can be improved by working in 2 to 3 inches of aged compost and/or sphagnum peat moss into the top 6 inches. A 5-10-10 fertilizer or bone and blood meal can also be added.

Separate the bulbs into unpeeled cloves. Push the largest cloves (the final bulb size is dependent on the size of the cloves planted), root end down, and burying the points 2 inches into the soil 6 inches apart. Mulch the cloves during the winter months if you don't have dependable snow cover.

Apply liquid feed every two weeks during the growing season if desired. Water regularly so the soil is constantly moist and remove weeds. Pinch off the coiled scapes on hardneck varieties to produce larger bulbs; you can use the scapes in cooking.

Harvesting

Garlic is ready to harvest when the green tops dry out and turn yellow-brown. If the bulb is well formed, the cloves are plump, and there are about three layers of papery covering, harvest the crop.



Not elephants

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) is a member of the lily family and is related to chives, leeks, onions, and shallots.

Elephant garlic (*Allium ampeloprasum*) is a different species and is not true garlic.

It has a very mild flavor with an onion-like aftertaste.

Cure the garlic in a dry, warm, well-ventilated place out of the sun for several weeks. Then cut the stalks 1 inch above the bulb and trim the roots close to the base of the bulb. Store the bulbs in mesh bags, paper sacks, or in shallow layers. Save some of the largest bulbs for next year's planting.

Selection and Preparation

When selecting garlic at a store, farmers market, or from your own

crop, the bulbs should be plump, firm, and have tight cloves with their paper-like covering intact. Avoid garlic that is soft, shriveled, moldy, or has a green stem (which can add an unpleasant bitterness to a dish if not removed).

Storing Garlic

Store fresh garlic out of refrigeration in a loosely covered container in a cool, dark, dry place. A few cloves of peeled garlic in a covered container can be stored in the refrigerator for several weeks.

Freezing

The easiest way to preserve garlic is to freeze it; however, this reduces its flavor profile and changes its texture. Just place the unpeeled bulb or peeled cloves in a freezer bag.

Drying

Drying garlic is a way to keep garlic indefinitely. Follow manufacturer's instructions for drying in a food dehydrator. Garlic can also be dried in the oven.

One of the few edibles planted in the fall, if garlic gets a good start and is cared for the next spring and summer, this ancient crop may add some more spice to your life!

For more information:

<http://www.gourmetgarlicgardens.com/>

<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/7231.pdf>.



Want more food and nutrition information? **Vicki Hayman** has a podcast site for you. See <http://bit.ly/vickipod>. Hayman is the nutrition and food safety educator based in Weston County and also serves Campbell, Crook, Johnson, and Sheridan counties. She can be reached at (307) 746-3531 or at vhayman@uwyo.edu