

# Growing Great Garlic

*Easy to grow, good for your health and even better for your taste buds.  
Enjoy the many flavours of home grown garlic. Vive la différence!*

## PREPARING THE SOIL

October is the best time to plant garlic. Try to pick a spot in the garden that will get at least six hours of direct sunlight each day. The soil should be light, well-drained, and rich in humus. If you have overly acidic soil (a pH below 5.5) then consider adding some lime since garlic doesn't like overly acidic conditions. You can even grow garlic in a container if space is limited, just make sure to pick one with a good sized drain hole. Adding bone meal (2-14-0) when planting will encourage healthy bulb growth, as it will slowly release nutrients to feed your garlic roots all winter long.

## PLANTING AND GROWING

Separate the cloves of the bulb, taking care not to damage the protective "skins." Plant each clove about 5cm (2") deep and 10cm (4") from its neighbours, garlic doesn't like competition so if it's crowded you will get smaller bulbs. The pointy end goes up, the flat end down. Mulching will reduce weeds and prevent soil erosion during the rainy months. An small application of nutrients in the spring (bone meal, sea soil, compost, or organic fertilizer) ensures nutrients are available for maximum growth. But try to avoid high nitrogen fertilizers which divert growth toward leaves and away from the bulbs.

Water moderately during dry spells, but avoid overwatering or poor drainage since that can result in bulb rot. Cut off young scapes (the flower stems) as they form to encourage bulb growth. But don't compost those scapes they are great to eat, sauté them up in butter, add them to a stir fry or even make them into garlic scape pesto.

## HARVESTING & STORING

Garlic usually matures in late July. If possible avoid watering in the final weeks before harvesting, as it helps with the curing. When half to three quarters of the leaves have begun to yellow, the bulbs are ready to be harvested. Lifting plants by hand reduces potential damage to the bulbs, but if necessary use a fork or shovel to lift the bulbs. Remove soil carefully, taking care to leave as much of the skin on the bulbs as possible for better long term storage.

Allow the bulbs to cure in a warm, dry spot for a week or two, making sure to leave air space between them. Never, ever wash your garlic bulbs. Once dry, brush any remaining dirt off the bulbs and cut off the dead leaves. Store them in a cool, dark, dry spot with good airflow. Garlic should never be stored in the fridge. The cloves can become soft and sprout, shortening storage life and affecting flavour. If stored properly you should enjoy them for months to come.