

You'll want to keep the weeds at bay, but if you've mulched well and planted in this method, weeding 2 or 3 times will probably be enough.

Knowing when to harvest can be a bit tricky. A general rule is to harvest when 4-5 leaves are brown but some are still green. Different varieties mature at different times. Traditionally, garlic in the northwest was harvested in late July or the first week of August. However, changing weather patterns and mild winters have affected the growth cycle and we have been harvesting our mature garlic in late June or early July for the past several years.

Dig the whole thing up—a small garden trowel works great. Knock the dirt off, and hang in bundles of 10-15 in a well ventilated space. After a month of curing, the bulbs should have dried down. Hardneck garlic tops will need to be cut, leaving an inch or two of hard top. Softnecks may be cut in the same manner, or the dried stalks may be left intact for braiding (if you're thinking of making a garlic braid, you'll need to do French braiding). With both types, you'll want to use a soft brush to remove the extra dirt, and scissors to trim the bottom root hairs and the tops as needed. Don't clean them so well that the bulbs begin to show—you will want a nice layer of papery skin on the outside so that your garlic will store for many months. Set aside the nicest, largest ones for planting. Any with imperfections should be consumed soon, and the rest can store for the winter season. Voila!



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One of our endeavors includes is our Seed Distro project. As a component of a Food Not Lawns project, we grow and collect seed from a variety of heirloom and open pollinated vegetables. Instead of marketing our wares as a source of income, we prefer to use the seed project for more altruistic purposes.

We want more people to grow their own food. We want organizations to help people learn to grow food and provide garden space for people who have none. We want heirloom varieties to be preserved, and to encourage species diversity for the health of our planet and people. So, we give our seed away. Thousands of packages of seed every year. 95% of our out of pocket expenses come from 2-4 members of the farm. Growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, materials, travel expenses...it's all been a pretty expensive labor of love but one that we find worthwhile. If you need seeds, or if you want to help support our program, please contact us!

Finney Farm's Quick Guide to Backyard Garlic Production



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Growing your own garlic is a good idea! It shortens the commodity chain which reduces cost and lessens environmental impact. Growing food in your backyard means no use of fossil fuels for transportation. In the US, food typically travels 1500-2500 miles between farmer and plate. By growing your own food, you can reduce that number to zero, and reap all the benefits of healthy, local, organic, produce.

In the Cascadia bioregion, garlic is typically planted in the autumn. We usually plant in mid to late October on our farm in Skagit County. The idea is that the cloves will have time to develop roots but not emerge above ground by the time of the first hard freeze.

There are two types of standard garlic: hardneck and softneck. We like to grow some of each. They are both planted and harvested in the same manner.

Hardneck sends up a hard stalk in late spring; you will want to snap this off so that the energy in the plant will go towards making a nice bulb rather than a flowering head. This stalk, or “scape,” is super yummy—think garlicky asparagus. Hardnecks are typically easier to peel but they don’t usually store as nicely as softneck.

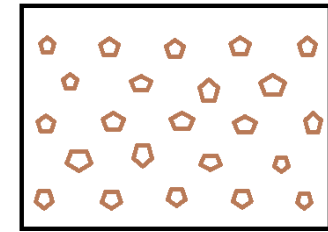
Softnecks are the type found in the grocery store. They are better keepers, usually more difficult to peel, and are the type used for making braids.

Choose garlic with large, healthy cloves. The first step is to “crack” the bulb, meaning to break it apart (without damage) into individual cloves. You’ll wind up with a nice pile like this: Don’t break them up until you’re ready to plant within a couple of days to keep them from drying out. Be sure to keep



varieties separate, so that you can plant more of your favorite varieties next year. Do not peel the clove. Garlic likes a loose soil with plenty of nutrients.

We like to plant in beds in a pattern like this:



This allows us to make the best use of our space. Our beds are about 4 feet wide, and we sit on a board laid across the bed to plant the garlic so that we don’t compress the soil. Plant the nicest cloves (don’t plant the puny ones or you will likely have puny garlic), with about 6 inches in between each clove. Imagine a nice sized bulb about 2.5 inches across with a little room on all sides and you’ll see this spacing. Plant with the pointy side up and the rough bottom side down. They’ll want to be about as deep as they are long—usually a couple of inches or so. We plant them a bit on the shallow side because we mulch them pretty heavily. You’ll want to cover them with at least 3 inches of mulch material—we use leaves but straw also works well. This mulch acts as a blanket and keeps them a bit moist but more importantly, minimizes damage from fluctuating temperatures.

In the spring the garlic will send up a nice green shoot. After this, you’ll just want to make sure that your bed is getting enough water, and you’ll probably wish to give it a little bit of compost tea or other liquid organic fertilizer a few times in early spring.