

# In the Garden

## Garlic

It's coming up to that time of year to plant your garlic. So many people love garlic. It's incredibly easy to grow- just plant it and walk away. There are garlic festivals worldwide to celebrate this smelly delight. It's good for you, tastes wonderful and is a staple in so many cuisines. I have never grown garlic until this year as it does not agree with me but I love a challenge. Sharing the plants has been a fun thing too. Garlic has a long history of use. It has been used as food and medicine all the way back to the early Egyptians and Romans. The English used garlic back in the 16th century but it fell out of favour there for a long time.

Garlic is part of the Alliums, the onion family, and is related to leeks, shallots, and chives. Garlic is actually a perennial plant!

All of these plants send up hollow, tubular (sometimes flattened) leaves from a bulb that grows below the ground. The leaves are followed by a flower stalk (scape), and then by the flower itself. Garlic may also produce "bulbils" – tiny bulbs that may begin to sprout, on the flower head. All parts of the garlic plant are edible, but the bulb is the most prized and useful in the kitchen.

The garlic bulb is divided into



numerous fleshy cloves, each clove, if planted will produce a new head. If left to its own devices, garlic will eventually form a small clump as its bulbs spread over the years.

Softneck garlic is easy to grow in mild climates. Choose the hardneck varieties for areas where winters are severe. Softneck usually produces smaller, more numerous cloves per head, and it stores particularly well. The sulfur odour of garlic was thought to repel demons, werewolves, and vampires. You would hang in the house, or rub it around windows, chimneys, and keyholes.

Garlic is so easy to grow. You

can plant cloves from September to the end of November. Separate the cloves and set each one, pointy end up, 10-15cm (4-6") apart and with the tip of the clove 2-5cm (1-2") deep. Don't skin the cloves! Use deeper planting if rain or frost may expose the cloves, and shallower planting if using mulch or planting into heavy soil. The largest cloves will make the largest bulbs.

Planting garlic near roses will help to repel aphids. Because of its sulfur compounds, it may also help repel whiteflies, Japanese beetles, root maggots, carrot rust fly, and other pests. Garlic, made into a tea, or spray, will act as a systemic pesticide, drawing up into the cells of the plants. It's a good companion for beets, Brassicas, celery, lettuce, potatoes, strawberries, and tomatoes. Avoid planting it near peas or beans of any kind. Elephant garlic is not garlic – it's a leek! Who cares, just plant it with your garlic and everyone will be happy. Stay safe by hanging out in your fall garden!

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