

Sheboygan Community Garden Garlic Guide

By: Ben Zellers

Planting

1. Garlic should be planted in early November. It may sprout before the winter, which is OK. If you weren't able to plant in the fall, a spring planting can work, but heads of garlic can be difficult to find at garden stores in the springtime. Farmers' markets usually start up too late to buy garlic for spring planting (when it can even be found at a spring market to begin with) – a springtime planting should be done as soon as the soil can be worked to a sufficient depth.
2. Till the planting area at least 6" deep.
3. Separate the garlic into individual cloves. Larger cloves generally lead to larger heads of garlic.
4. Plant the cloves root side down so that the top of the clove is 2-3 inches below the surface of the soil, about 6" apart. Do not remove dry roots or the papery dried outer layers.
5. Cover the soil with a generous amount of straw mulch to keep down weeds and retain moisture. Ignore until springtime.

Growing

1. Shoots will emerge in the springtime, depending on when the ground thaws. Keep an eye on emerging shoots to make sure they punch through the mulch OK.
2. Pull any weeds that start to emerge.
3. Water if needed through mid-June. Unless there is a hot, dry spell lasting over a week or so, garlic generally won't need to be watered.
4. Trim the little curlicue shoots ("scapes") that start to emerge from the top in late spring in hardneck varieties of garlic. They can be used in place of garlic in dishes like stir-fries. If the scapes are allowed to continue growing the garlic heads will be much smaller when harvested.

Harvesting

1. Garlic should be harvested when the leaves have turned about half brown – generally in mid- to late July in WI.
2. Dig up the heads of garlic with a garden shovel; allow enough space when digging to avoid nicking the garlic. Do not pull the garlic out of the ground by the stem.
3. Brush off dirt. Do not trim or remove roots or green leaves.
4. Hang to dry for about two weeks in a cool, well-ventilated area. After the stalks are dry you can brush off any dried dirt and remove dried leaves. Long-term storage should be in a cool, dry place, such as a basement. Garlic will last about 8-12 months.

Types of Garlic

There are virtually limitless varieties of garlic which come in two main categories: hardneck and softneck. Almost all garlic found in grocery stores is softneck garlic. Softneck has overlapping cloves, more (usually smaller) cloves per head and is generally more difficult to peel. Hardneck generally has fewer, larger cloves that don't overlap, are arranged around a central stem, and are easier to peel.

DO NOT start with "grocery store" garlic. While it may end up growing, it's usually a softneck variety that is grown in warmer climates than Wisconsin and is sometimes treated to inhibit sprouting. Instead, start with heads of garlic from a farmers' market or from various garden stores. Hardneck garlic is generally more suited for Wisconsin, although it tends to not store quite as long as softneck. There are more varieties of hardneck garlic than softneck. If purchased from a farmers' market you will need to store the heads of garlic in a cool, dry place until planting time. Garden stores generally have garlic available at planting time, although you may need to buy it earlier to ensure a decent selection. Alternatively, there are many online gardening websites [that sell garlic](#). Read the descriptions and select a few varieties that sound good to you. "[Music](#)" is an excellent variety, in particular.