



Garlic

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Types of Garlic

There are hundreds of varieties of garlic. There are two broad classifications, softneck and hardneck. The type you commonly find at the grocery store is a softneck Silverskin variety. This type does not grow very well in Kansas. Most of the types we can grow successfully here are hardneck varieties.

Hardneck varieties have sturdier stalks, often have larger cloves, brightly colored papers on the cloves, and a wide range of flavors from spicy to mild. They also usually put on "scapes" in the spring. The scapes are the flower stalks and buds, which many people consider a once-a-season gourmet treat!

The hardneck varieties have 5 main varietal groups: Porcelain, Purple Stripe, Marbled Purple Stripe, Glazed Purple Stripe, and Rocambole. There are 3 variety groups that do not produce the scapes well, they are: Creole, Asiatic, and Turban.

There are 2 distinct varietal groups of softneck garlics: Artichoke and Silverskin.

The interesting thing about all of these garlics is that most of them have only been available to us in the U.S. since 1989! Some of the most common varieties came to the U.S. with Polish, German, and Italian immigrants. The rest were collected in different parts of the former Soviet Union after 1989. You might think of Russia as being cold, but there are many different climates throughout Russia, not to mention the former Soviet states of Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

Some of the variety groups are more adapted to long, cold winters, cool, moist springs, and warm summers. Other varieties are more tolerant of mild winters and warm springs. Some varieties cannot tolerate hot, dry spring weather. It can be tricky to determine what varieties do best here in Kansas, because all those different types of weather can occur in different combinations each year.

Soil Requirements

Garlic grows best in well-drained, fertile sandy loam soil. It prefers a slightly acidic pH of 6.3-6.8. Looser soil aids in the development of larger bulbs, so tilling the soil before planting is recommended.

Amend the soil with compost and apply phosphorus if indicated by a soil test. Phosphorus is the key nutrient for good growth of garlic bulbs.

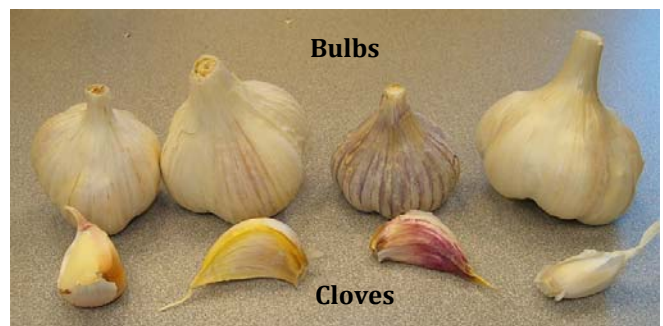
Planting Garlic

It is best to rotate the planting location from year to year and to not plant garlic in the same location where onions or other related plants have been grown recently.

Garlic should be planted in the first part of October and overwintered for harvest the following summer. It can be planted later in the fall, but yield may be reduced. Spring planted garlic will have significantly smaller bulbs and lower overall yield.

To plant, break the bulbs into individual cloves. Do not remove the papery skins from the cloves. Plant within 5 days to prevent the cloves from drying out.

One pound of garlic typically yields a 30' planted row, although different varieties will yield a different



Different varieties of garlic have bulbs of different sizes and shapes. The papers cover the individual cloves also display different colors. Also, clove size is different for each variety.

number of cloves per pound. Larger cloves will typically produce larger bulbs.

Cloves should be planted 2" deep with the blunt end down and the tip pointing up. Plant cloves 6" apart in rows 12" apart. In a raised bed, rows need only be 6-8" apart.

Water thoroughly after planting. Water as needed when the soil is dry.

Mulching with straw or leaves is recommended but not required for successful growth. Put the mulch down in the late fall or early winter.

Spring Care

Remove mulch after the frost-free date in the spring to allow the soil to warm.

Fertilize with a balanced fertilizer or good quality compost after removing the mulch.

Keep the planting area weed free. Garlic has short roots and does not compete well for water and nutrients.



Keep the planting area well watered but not saturated.

Garlic Scapes

In the late spring or early summer, hardneck varieties will send up a flower stalk. This flower stalk is called a "scape." The scapes should be cut off, because they will put on seeds that sap energy and flavor from the developing bulbs. Bulb sizes can be as much as 30% smaller if you leave the scapes on the plants. The scapes can be used in stir-fry or in other recipes similar to how you would use green onions or scallions.



Harvest

Most garlic varieties will be ready to harvest in late June to mid-July. The best indicator of time to harvest is when 5 of the outermost leaves have yellowed and died. When 3 to 4 leaves have yellowed, discontinue watering.

Dig the whole plant with a garden fork and let dry in a shady spot with good air circulation for one day. Then brush the excess dirt from the bulbs and tied the plants in bunches.



Hang the bunches, bulb down, in a shady, well-ventilated location. They will require 2 to 3 weeks to dry sufficiently. Properly dried garlic will last longer.

Storage

When drying is complete, clip the roots short and trim the leaves, leaving about 1" of the neck.

Store the dried bulbs in mesh bags in a cool, dry area. Ideal storage conditions are 50 degrees F with humidity less than 60%.

For longer storage, place the bulbs in paper bags in the vegetable drawer of the refrigerator. The garlic will remain usable until February or March.

"Rubbery" old garlic can be dried in a dehydrator and ground into garlic powder.

Garlic Variety Recommendations:

Varietal Group	Variety
Artichoke	Inchelium Red
Creole	Ajo Rojo
Glazed Purple Stripe	Purple Glazer
Porcelain	Music
Purple Stripe	Chesnok Red
Turban	Maiskij

These are varieties that performed well for us. There are hundreds of varieties that we did not try and that you may find to do well in your garden.

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