

East Brook Community Farm's Garlic Growing Guide

eastbrookfarm.com/garlic-growing-guide

FALL / PLANTING

- Choose a sunny location in your garden with rich, well drained soil.
- Before planting, be sure to prepare your soil by weeding and adding compost and/or fertilizer, depending on your garden's needs.
- We plant our garlic anywhere between mid-October and late November. This allows the garlic to establish roots while minimizing shoot growth. (If shoots emerge too early, they can draw moisture and energy away from the clove, which could damage and kill some of your plants.) Adjust your planting time if you live in a different climate zone.
- Break up your garlic bulbs into individual cloves (leave the skins on).
- Plant cloves root side down, pointy side up. Cloves should be planted about 1 inch deep. Space plants 6-8" apart, in rows 6-8" apart.
- Cover your beds with 6" of mulch. Old hay, straw, shredded leaves, and grass clippings all work well. This protects cloves from the freeze/thaw cycles of winter and suppresses weeds.

SPRING / MAINTENANCE

- On our farm, garlic typically begins to sprout sometime between mid-March and mid-April. Once spring arrives, check periodically to see if your beds have enough mulch. If the mulch has decomposed significantly, add more. Hand pull any weeds that poke through the mulch.
- In May and June, monitor your garlic's growth. Water as needed based on soil moisture (garlic likes ½"-1" of water per week). If the leaves appear yellow or the plants seem stunted, you may need to fertilize your plants. While there are many options, we personally like to use a combination fish/seaweed emulsion.
- When the garlic scapes (flower stalks) grow in June, cut or pull these stalks. This helps the garlic direct more of its energy into the bulb itself. Plus, garlic scapes are delicious!
- As your garlic leaves start to turn brown, stop watering them.

SUMMER / HARVESTING AND CURING

- Harvest garlic when about half of the leaves have turned yellow/brown, usually in mid- to late July. Avoid harvesting in the rain or immediately after a significant rain event.
- If your soil is loose, you can pull bulbs by hand without breaking the stalks. You may need to first loosen the soil with a digging fork before pulling the bulbs. Brush excess soil off the plants.
- Garlic must be cured in order to store well. There are many methods. We hang our garlic in bundles in our barn. The key is to cure your garlic in a warm, dark, dry place with good airflow. For us, it may take a month or more for bulbs to fully cure. Using fans speeds up the process.
- Once the stalks are completely dry and crispy, open up a few bulbs. If their clove wrappers are glossy or moist, your garlic isn't fully cured yet. If they are dry, your garlic is cured.
- Set aside your best garlic bulbs for replanting again in the Fall.

How do I store my seed / culinary garlic?

SEED GARLIC (garlic for planting)

Store your seed garlic at room temperature with adequate ventilation, such as in an open cardboard box or paper/mesh bag. Seed garlic can mold if stored in sealed containers or plastic bags.

CULINARY GARLIC (garlic for eating)

For most of us, the kitchen counter is a great place to store culinary garlic. Garlic does store well at room temperature, but it may not keep for as many months as it does at cold temperatures.

If you're trying to store garlic to eat for many months, your best bet is a dark, cold, dry space. Always store garlic in a well-ventilated container. Culinary garlic keeps longest when kept below 40 degrees and around 60-70% humidity. However, for most of us, that may be difficult to achieve. If you can't store it below 40 degrees, then store it at 56 degrees or above (the closer to 56, the better). *Avoid storing your garlic between 40 and 55 degrees. This temperature encourages the garlic to sprout.*

If your garlic begins to sprout before you use it all, that's fine - you can still eat it. Use it up relatively quickly.