

Growing Garlic in Cold Climates

It's easy to grow garlic in Wisconsin.

Noel Valdes, Presenter

Good cooks need garlic. It's a healthy and flavorful vegetable that can be grown in the home garden.

5 steps to growing good garlic:

- 1 Start with healthy seed (cloves)
- 2 Good growing/soil conditions
- 3 Plant in fall, not spring
- 4 Plant on ridges in well-drained soil
- 5 Mulch with straw

Garlic - *allium sativum*. Closely related to onions. Both hard neck and soft neck varieties can be grown in Wisconsin. Hard necks produce scapes. Soft necks store better, but hard necks often have larger cloves and are more flavorful. Generally, but not necessarily, hard necks are grown in the north and soft necks in the south.

The best time to plant garlic in Wisconsin is the last week of October, but you can plant in fall until the ground freezes. Spring planted cloves will not produce as large a plant and will not store as well.

Best results are in ridged raised beds, but planting in ridged hills is also effective. In any case, the soil must be well drained. Garlic does not like "wet feet".

Spacing for most garlic should be 6" to 8" apart. Fall planted garlic must be mulched to prevent freezing. Straw is the best mulch.

Garlic can be interplanted with lettuces and other greens.

Pests and diseases are similar to those for others in the onion family. Crop rotation and cleanliness help to keep problems minimal.

Garlic scapes should be removed as they appear. Scapes are edible.

Try not to water for two weeks before harvest.

Harvest when the bulbs are fully formed and before the outer skins start to split. Too early: the bulb still looks like an onion. Too late: the papery layers of skin are split open exposing the cloves.

Harvest the whole plant by lifting it out with a fork.

Gently clean the bulbs and “cure” for two weeks in a warm dry area.

Don’t wash garlic bulbs before storing (if you can help it).

Hard neck garlics cannot be braided. The stems should be trimmed to about 2” lengths.

Best storage is hanging in a mesh bag or basket.

Questions and comments:

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