

✧ Renee's Garden ✧

Garlic & Shallots Growing Guide

When to Plant

In mild winter areas, where the ground does not freeze hard, plant garlic and shallots anytime between mid-October to mid-November. In very cold winter areas with prolonged hard frost, plant about 1 month before the ground freezes.

Soil Preparation

Choose a garden spot with at least six hours of sun a day and well-drained soil. Raised beds are ideal for growing garlic and shallots because they have excellent drainage (especially important for shallots, which can be susceptible to rot). Remove any weeds and break up the soil well, incorporating several inches of organic material like well-rotted manure or finished compost for improved soil texture and added drainage. Work in a good granular fertilizer at the rate specified for vegetable crops (we recommend [Down to Earth Bio Fish Organic Fertilizer](#), available on our website).

Planting

For garlic, first separate each garlic bulb into individual cloves. For garlic and shallots, plant each bulb 1½ inches deep with the tip pointing up.

IMPORTANT: Garlic is shipped in the fall and should be planted in fall for harvest the following summer. There are two types:

- **Hardneck Garlic**
(*Allium sativum* var. *ophioscorodon*)
Large cloves grow in a single circle around a woody stem; stronger in flavor and shorter storage than softnecks. Approx. 5-10 cloves per head.
- **Softneck Garlic**
(*Allium sativum* var. *sativum*)
Plump cloves grow in several layers around a soft central stem. Mild in flavor and the best for braiding and long term storage. Approx. 8-18 cloves per head.

Plant the cloves 6 inches apart, spacing rows about 18 inches apart. After planting, water thoroughly, then water again only when soil is dry; good drainage is critical to good growth. In cold northern areas, cover garlic with 4-6 inches of a lightweight mulch, such as straw, to protect it over the winter. Remove the mulch in early spring.

Growing Notes

Fall planted garlic and shallots establish their root systems underground before winter's coldest weather, then grow vigorously throughout spring. Keep your patch well weeded to reduce competition and plan to feed your bulbs monthly during the active growing season using any good well-balanced fertilizer at the rate recommended on the package. The bulbs do best with about 1 inch of

water per week, so where rainfall is sparse or in dry summer areas, plan on irrigating regularly.

If your garlic tops send up flower stalks (called scapes), it's best to cut them off to redirect energy into growing big bulbs underground. The strong-tasting stalks are edible and some people enjoy using them in the kitchen.

The leaves from both shallots and garlic are also tasty in salads, sautés, rice or pasta dishes. However, when harvesting “green garlic”, be aware that it will affect the bulb's ultimate size and the plant will not grow a full head. It's such a delicious treat, we think it's worth sacrificing a few heads! Use green garlic whenever you want a mild but distinctive garlic flavor.

Harvesting and Curing

In early summer, the plants mature and the green tops begin to turn brown, dry out and fall over. Stop watering at this point and wait about a week, then check a few bulbs in the ground by scraping away the dirt. You want to make sure the heads have reached a good size and individual cloves are securely wrapped in their papery skins before harvesting.

Use a spading fork or a flat, narrow-bladed shovel to carefully loosen the ground around the bulbs. Pull each one out by hand, trim the roots to ¼ - ½ inch and brush off clinging soil and debris.

If you want to braid the bulbs for storage, do it soon after harvest while the leaves are pliable. Shallots and soft-neck garlic varieties can be braided easily, but hardneck garlic varieties send up a stiff stalk which makes plaiting difficult.

Let the freshly harvested bulbs cure for at least 3 weeks (4 is even better) in a cool, shady area with good air circulation. This is a critical step that really improves both flavor and storage time. If you live in a humid climate, make sure they have the best air circulation you can offer.

Storage

For best results, store your cured bulbs in a cool and dry place 45-50°F (7-10°C) is ideal and don't stack them over 4 inches deep. With good storage conditions, you can expect about 6-8 months for softneck garlic varieties, 3-4 months for hardneck garlic and shallots.

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