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Sow your Garlic for Next Year

As summer comes to a close, we begin to harvest the last of our carefully-tended crops. However, the arrival of autumn does not mean that gardening has to fully come to an end. Garlic is a crop that is grown during the colder months, and we are in luck that it also is an easy crop to manage. Rather than purchasing garlic that is imported from a distant country, you can easily grow a much tastier crop at home.

When to Plant

Those of us who live in Canada should plant their garlic cloves in mid-autumn and harvest them the following summer. This is the same for other regions with colder climates. We plant the garlic cloves before the ground becomes frozen to allow time for the roots to grow, but the foliage that grows above ground will only begin to grow when the ground is thawed in the spring months the following year.¹

The Soil

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It is recommended to plant the garlic cloves in a sunny location with soil that is fertile and well-drained.²

Purchasing your garlic cloves

The *Old Farmer's Almanac* is recommending that you do not use the garlic bulbs from the grocery store as they may be unsuitable for planting in your area. Instead, purchase your bulbs at an organic seed company.³

How to Plant

Firstly, break apart the garlic cloves from the bulb. According to the video *How to Plant Garlic*, all you need to plant your garlic cloves is a hand and a thumb. You will have to distribute the garlic cloves a hands-length – from your fingertips to the base of your hand – apart from each other on the soil. The garlic clove will need to be planted thumb-deep into the soil, with the pointy end of the clove facing the sky.⁴ You do not need to remove the husk from the garlic cloves.

Care

In colder regions, it is recommended that a thick layer of mulch – preferably four inches thick – be added on top of the soil after planting. The mulch would consist of straw, grass, or leaves.⁵ Remember to remove the mulch in spring.⁶ Once foliage begins to grow, you may see that some of the stalks produce flowers. To ensure that all the nutrients are directed to the bulb rather than the flower, we will need to cut these stalks.⁷ Water every three to five days during May to June, as that is when bulbing takes place.⁸ The garlic flowers can be eaten in salads, used as a marinade or used in cooking.

Harvesting

The garlic is ready to be harvested in summer, when the long shoots that have grown above ground become yellow-brown and begin to fall back down to the soil.⁹ You can dig up a sample to make sure the crop is truly ready; when you dig the bulb up, the cloves should be firm and not break off from the bulb, and the husk should be thick and papery.¹⁰ You will need to dig the bulbs up from the ground by using a fork or other suitable garden tool. Keep your newly-harvested garlic bulbs in a cool, dry and shady area where they can suitably dry off for two to three weeks.

Storage

The garlic bulbs are ready once the husk and roots are dry and brittle, and when you can break the cloves apart easily. You can tie the garlic in bunches and hang them, or cut the stem a few inches above the bulb and store it on shelves that are in an airy, dark and dry area. Separate some of the largest bulbs for planting in the autumn, and repeat the process.¹¹

¹ <https://www.almanac.com/plant/garlic>

² <https://www.burpee.com/gardenadvicecenter/vegetables/garlic/garlic/article10268.html>

³ <https://www.almanac.com/plant/garlic>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIsnAwoltBM>

⁵ <https://www.burpee.com/gardenadvicecenter/vegetables/garlic/garlic/article10268.html>

⁶ <https://www.almanac.com/plant/garlic>

⁷ <https://www.burpee.com/gardenadvicecenter/vegetables/garlic/garlic/article10268.html>

⁸ <https://www.almanac.com/plant/garlic>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIsnAwoltBM>

¹⁰ <https://www.almanac.com/plant/garlic>

¹¹ <https://www.burpee.com/gardenadvicecenter/vegetables/garlic/garlic/article10268.html>