How to Grow Your Own Garlic

Garlic is a popular vegetable that grows best in a sunny site with fertile, well-drained soil. It’s an easy one to start with because it can be left to its own devices for most of the year. Buy cloves from a garden centre rather than trying to plant garlic from the supermarket. Those varieties probably won’t be disease-resistant or suited to the British climate.

Did You Know?
The American city of Chicago is named after garlic. It comes from ‘shikaakwa’, the Indian word for wild garlic (allium tricoccum).

Planting

- Prepare the soil by adding fertiliser at a rate of 50g per square metre
- Carefully break up the bulbs into cloves
- Plant each clove about 2.5cm deep, pointy end up
- The tip of the bulb should sit just below the soil’s surface
- Cloves should be spaced 15cm apart in rows 30cm apart
- Water in and cover the rows with horticultural fleece to stop birds stealing the cloves
- If you are growing garlic in containers, they need to be at least 20cm deep and wide to give roots enough room to grow
- Space the cloves 10cm apart and avoid planting too near the container edges
- Water and cover as before

How to look after me

- Soil: Rich and well-drained
- Position: Sunny
- Location: Outdoors, container

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Growing

• Regularly pull up weeds that appear in the soil, as they can smother the garlic plants
• Generally you do not need to water garlic
• However, if there are any dry spells in spring or early summer, give the plants a good watering
• Do not water once the bulbs have become large and well-formed, as this may cause them to rot
• If any flowers form (this is rare) just snip them off with scissors

Harvesting

• Harvest the bulbs once the leaves have turned yellow
• Carefully lift them out with a hand fork and leave them to dry out in an airy place
• They will store for up to three months

David’s Top Tip

If you want to plait the garlic stems after harvesting, cut short the drying process. Too dry and the stems will crack and break as you plait them.

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