



## Garden Tips & Techniques

It's the Fourth of July, and in the garden that means it's time to harvest garlic! Garlic is an over-wintering crop that is fairly simple to grow.

### HOW TO GROW GARLIC

For the first year, you'll want to purchase seed garlic – or buy garlic from a farmer at a market. You want garlic that hasn't been treated to delay sprouting, so grocery store garlic may not be a good choice. Once you have harvested your own garlic, you'll be able to save some heads for seed.

You'll start to grow this summer-harvested crop in the fall - late October or November is best. Garlic needs the winter dormant period to trigger bulb formation. Separate the heads into cloves, leave the "wrappers" on each of these cloves, and plant them 2-3" deep, & 4-6" apart, in loamy, fertile soil. Make sure to put the root end down and the pointed growing tip up! Mulch your garlic with 4-6" of straw or leaves, and wait for spring!

In the early spring, around the beginning of March, remove most of the mulch from the beds, to allow the garlic to grow. It is usually the first thing up in the garden! Keep it well watered until the leaves start to brown in the early summer heat.

Usually in late May or early June the plant will develop a "scape" or seed pod. This scape looks like a rounded green shoot, sent straight out the top of the plant. When this shoot curls once, clip it close to where it emerges from the plant. These garlic scapes have a garlicky and slightly sweet flavor. They are excellent cooked whole like asparagus or lightly cooked and added into other dishes.

When the bottom leaves of the plant have browned and there are only 5-6 green leaves left at the tops of the plants, it is time to harvest! The garlic is usually ready to harvest in this area around July 4.

### HOW TO HARVEST GARLIC

Since you've dedicated precious garden space to your garlic plants, tended them well, and waited for so long, be sure to harvest your garlic correctly! Following the right steps will help you keep your garlic long enough to use some for seed in the fall.

- Loosen the soil around the garlic plants. Use a trowel, shovel, or digging fork. *Stay a few inches away from the garlic heads* – you don't want to slice through a bulb!
- If the soil is loose enough, reach into the soil around each garlic head and give the garlic a hearty pull. *Don't pull by the stem, as it may break off from the garlic bulb.*

- If the soil is too hard, work your way closer to the bulb with a small hand too, like a trowel, until you can grasp the head of garlic and give it a pull.
- Brush soil off of the garlic head and *leave the roots and stem attached*.
- Your garlic is ready to eat. But if you have enough garlic to store some, you will need to “cure” it in a dry, shaded place, between 60 and 70 degrees. On our production farms, we tie it in small bunches by the stems and hang it to dry.
- When the leaves and stems are completely dry, clip the stem and roots off of the garlic bulb. Brush any additional soil off the bulb – it’s ok to remove a couple of papery layers to get down to a smooth, clean layer.
- Store in a cool, dry place. Your garlic should hold for many months, so enjoy it into the winter!

Link to slide show: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/growpittsburgh2012/show/>