

# Growing Garlic



With its multitude of uses, everyone should be growing garlic in north Texas. It's easy to do, has few insect or disease problems, and with good cultural practices, it offers many health benefits and the amazing requisite flavors for many types of cooking!

**TIMING:** Garlic is best planted 4-6 weeks before the ground freezes, which is generally the month of October.

**SELECTION:** The hard neck types peel easier, and are more pungent with greater flavor variations. The soft neck varieties are milder, but tend to store better, and are ideal for braiding.

**SITE:** Choose a site that is in full sun, 6-8 hours, or part sun for garlic to do its best. Soils should be fertile and high in organic matter and very well drained in order to prevent rot.

**PREP:** A quick soak of the bulb in a seaweed or root stimulator solution will start them off right.

- Break each bulb into individual cloves. Any smaller cloves will produce smaller bulbs of garlic.

**PLANT:** with point up and root down 1-2 inches: 1 inch in harder soils, 2 inches in heavily cultivated ones, spacing a minimum of 4 inches apart, in 8 inch rows.

- Mulch with 1" of a loose mulch and water in well. The plants will emerge in about 2 weeks, depending upon temperature.

## **CULTURE:**

- Keep the soil moist but not wet, and don't allow it to dry out.
- Fertilize minimally with a slightly higher nitrogen food in spring when active growth has begun. Foliar sprays can work well, such as Hasta-Gro. Once bulbing begins, no fertilizer will affect the plant.
- Keep the growing area weeded; heavy cultivating can damage the small roots of garlic.
- Some hardneck types may try to flower, and this is best removed as it may take up too much energy.
- Should a hard freeze be predicted, lightly cover developed plants with frost cloth.

**HARVEST:** Timing is important. Do not wait to harvest. If dug too early, the garlic won't store well, but cannot be stored in the ground as with onions. Wait until the green tops just begin to turn yellow and fall over with the increasingly warmer temperatures about May.

- Carefully lift with a fork, and lay in shade. Do not wash or cut tops or roots, brush off remaining soil, and store in an airy, cool, dry place out of direct sunlight to cure for 3 weeks to 2 months, at which time the tops and roots may be removed.
- Store at 45-55 degrees to keep the bulbs from resprouting.



# Growing Shallots

Shallots are planted at the same time as garlic, but separately from them since they have slightly different cultural requirements more similar to onions. With their milder, more delicate flavor, shallots are the gourmet onion intrinsic to French cooking.

**SITE:** Shallots need full to part sun, with soils very loose and fertile with excellent drainage.

**PLANT:** Space 4-6 inches apart, in rows 18 inches wide, planting barely 1 inch deep, as those planted too deeply produce longer bulbs that do not store as well or simply rot.

## **CULTURE:**

- Consistent soil moisture is the key to success with shallots. Watering should always taper off toward maturity; shallots mature better in much drier soils than garlic.
- It is important to pull back any mulch or soil as the bulbs begin to form on the surface.

## **HARVEST:**

- When most of the tops have turned brown and fallen over, shallots can be gently loosened from their soil with care to avoid bruising.
- Do not trim the leaves, and air dry for 2-3 weeks until tops have completely shriveled, then cut. Spread the bulbs out to cure for 2-3 months.

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## Project List: Garlic & Shallots

- NHG Organic Herb & Veggie Food or Espoma Garden-Tone** fertilizers.
- Liquid Seaweed** to soak bulbs and for foliar spraying.
- Light mulches such as **Pine Needle Mulch**.
- Additional **Vital Earth Organic Compost**.
- See **NHG's Raised Bed Soil Formula** to start the soil right.