

# Garlic Harvesting, Storage and Preserving

## Parts that are Harvested

- bulb
- scapes

## Days to Harvest

Hot weather can speed up the maturity rate for garlic.

## Cues to Harvest

- Immature garlic (harvested too early) lacks some character and flavor, but it is hardly noticeable when tasted by average consumers
- Harvest a little early if you want to braid them, so the greens are more pliable (softnecks only)
- Harvesting too late can make the clove wrappers degrade - crack or get holes, and disintegrate - so they don't store as long. They also may get kind of grey and ugly looking. You will know a garlic head is overmature if it's really smelly.
- If you are harvesting for seed stock, you can allow the bulb to be left in the ground until it dies back. They won't store well, so make sure to plant before the freeze. The bulbs are easier to crack when they are overripe like this.
- many gardeners use the leaves as an indicator; others use bulb color, but that requires digging them up to check, so I have concentrated on the leaves. Each brown or dead leaf represents bulb wrappers that are decayed; the number of green leaves present indicates how many solid wrappers are on the bulb.

## Hardneck Varieties (AKA Ophioscorodon, Top-setting Garlic)

- if you choose to snip the scapes off, leave a few on to use as indicators. Harvest the bulb after the scape goes back to upright, but before the scape spathe (flower) has opened. Dig up a sample to see if you can see the individual cloves through the outer skin. If so, then they are ready!
- another indicator is the number of green leaves left on the plant: harvest when 6 green leaves remain
- hardnecks are ready 2-3 weeks after softnecks

## Softneck Varieties (AKA Sativum, Artichoke Garlic, Silverskin)

- harvest timing is less critical than for the other varieties
- softnecks are ready before hardnecks: one source claimed a few days to 1 week, another said 2-3 weeks earlier than hardnecks

- When a third of the leaves are brown or drying (from the bottom up) dig up a bulb or two to check. You should be able to see the individual cloves through the outer skin.
- another source went by the number of green leaves, as opposed to brown or dying: harvest when they still have at least five green leaves

### Methods of Harvesting Garlic

- Loosen the soil around the bulb, then cut under the bulb to sever the anchoring roots. This reduces potential damage the bulb.
- Handle the bulbs gently, since cuts and bruises decrease storage time and allow the garlic compounds to vaporize off.
- Use a pitch fork or shovel to loosen the soil under the bulb, then it can be easily pulled out
- Direct sunlight should be avoided; sunburned garlic turns translucent yellow and spoils quickly.

### Curing Garlic

Curing garlic allows it to be stored - cured garlic is what you find at the store.

To cure your homegrown garlic:

- After pulling from the soil, lightly dust the dirt off the bulb and roots
- To cut or not to cut:
  - Some people believe that leaving the tops and roots uncut for the drying process ensures a longer storage time. I haven't experimented with it, but I find it easier to leave them intact - although it takes more room... There are studies that show the incidence of disease in stored garlic is reduced nearly 65% by waiting to cut the necks off until after they have cured. Also, if you leave the greens on, you can braid them in bunches of 12 or so, then hang them up. You can also just use the greens to tie them up to a rack or hooks.
  - If you choose to cut them off, cut the roots 1 cm below the bulb; cut the greens off 3 cm above the bulb.
- Lay them out on a rack or screen, leaving room between each to allow good air movement. It's best done in a shady, warm, dry spot.
- It takes 2-3 weeks at about 85 degrees F.
- Trim the tops & roots to the same dimensions when done curing, if you left them on

### Storage of Garlic

- **Fresh or Green Garlic (Uncured)**

- **Cured Garlic**

- Depending on the variety, you can keep garlic on hand for up to a year, unless it's overripe
- Individual cloves do not store well
- Optimum storage conditions for cured garlic: 55-65 degrees F with 40%-60% humidity
- If humidity is too low (below 40%), the cloves will start shrinking, especially the hardnecks
  - Swollen root nodules indicate storage time is short. They do not indicate quality or taste, just that they are close to sprouting. Keeping the humidity low in storage will help keep the roots from swelling.
  - Don't store garlic in the fridge because the humidity is too high. It may sprout or develop mold
  - The flavor of garlic increases in the short term, but starts decreasing eventually
  - Overripe Garlic Storage times:
    - Hardneck: 2 months
    - Softneck: 3-4 months

- **Frozen**

- Can be frozen unpeeled; just break off cloves as needed
- Grind or chop, then wrap tightly and freeze. To use, just break some off or grate it.
- Pureed with olive oil (1 part garlic:2 parts oil), garlic can keep for up to 6 months, and because the oil doesn't freeze solid, you can scoop some out without defrosting.
  - Submerge peeled cloves in olive oil. Must be kept in freezer. Botulism can result if not kept cold enough.

- **Roasted Garlic**

- Refrigerate roasted garlic for up to 2 days in a small bowl
- Roasted garlic can be frozen for about 6 months
- Minced garlic and mixed into butter, can be frozen up to 9 months (refrigerate for up to 1 week).

- **Dried**

- Dry at 140 degrees F for 2 hours, then lower temp to 130 degrees F until dry and crisp.

- Blend or pulverize dried garlic to make powder
- **Pickled**
  - Pickled garlic can be kept in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks
  - Canned via the boiling water method for 10 minutes, pickled garlic can keep for up to 1 year
  - peeled cloves can be kept submerged in wine in the fridge until it shows mold growth or yeast on the surface of the wine. Just remove cloves as needed. The wine gets infused and can also be used in cooking. Do not allow to sit at room temperature.

## Sources

Footnote	BCMA	GGG	PE
Title	<a href="#">Garlic Factsheet</a>	Growing Great Garlic	Put 'em Up!
Author(s)	British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture	Ron L. Engeland	Sherri Brook
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### GARLIC (organic) – *Allium sativum*

*"Eat leeks in March and wild garlic in May,  
And all the year after physicians may play."  
Old Welsh saying*

#### Introduction

Garlic and its relatives, onions, leeks, and shallots all belong to the lily family (Liliaceae) and the genus *Allium*. The common garlic family plants are:

- Allium sativum* ophioscorodon - hard neck garlic, Syn. *A. sativum* 'topino'
- Allium sativum* sativum - soft neck garlic
- Allium ursinum* - ramson's garlic (not commercially grown)
- Allium vineale* - crow garlic (not commercially grown)
- Allium tuberosum* - chive's garlic (not commercially grown)
- Allium ampeloprasum* - elephant garlic (actually a leek), aka. Gigantum

Most garlic grown in British Columbia is of the hardneck sub-species rather than the softneck, but both do equally well with softnecks having slightly larger bulbs on average. Hardnecks have 4 – 12 cloves per bulb and produce a flower stalk called a scape. Softneck types can have up to 24 cloves per bulb and don't generally have a scape. Both sub-species are planted from September 15<sup>th</sup> to mid October in the interior and much later or all winter in warmer locations. Most strains require a cold period before proper growth will take place and fall planting satisfies this.



Commercial garlic, without specific manipulation, produces no true seed so no crossing or exchange of genetic material can occur naturally. Cultivars come from small changes (micro-mutations) in individual plants that happen naturally and man selects these for propagation. Different shaped cloves might be an example of this.

Elephant garlic is not true garlic but a type of leek, produces large cloves and may develop several small bulbs at the base of the bulb. It is also much milder than garlic, and can be slightly bitter. It has a large scape, which may be cut and sold to forage. The immature scapes of elephant and hardnecks can be harvested and used for vegetable stir-fry, pesto or pickled.

The chemistry of garlic is complicated, but this quote from 'Gourmet Garlic Garden' located at <http://200.www.gourmetgarlicgardens.com/chemistry.htm> explains it quite simply. "If you slice open a clove of garlic, you will see it's composed of cells separated by cellular walls. Thanks to research conducted in 1951 by two Swiss chemists, Dr. Arthur Stoll and Dr. Ewald Bebbek, we know these cells contain either a cysteine-based sulfur oil (allicin) and/or a protein-based enzyme called alliinase, which acts as a catalyst and they are kept apart by the cellular walls. The clove has little or no discernible smell until you slice it allowing these two compounds to mix and form a third compound, diallyl disulphinate, commonly called allicin. ... It is the allicin that is thus formed by chemical action that has the familiar garlic smell. Allicin is a volatile and short-lived (a few hours) compound, which if left alone, will break down into other compounds, such as diallyl disulphide. In a matter of hours it will further degrade into an oily waxy brew of bisulphides, trisulphides such as methyl allyl trisulphide, methanethiol, polysulphide and many others. ... Raw garlic contains no oil. Oil is not formed until garlic is crushed and then degrades down into the oily mix of sulphurous compounds mentioned above". ... It is the allicin which is garlic's natural protection from pests and diseases and when we eat fresh garlic it protects us too". There is no way to avoid the aroma of garlic about oneself if one wants it to work'.

## Garlic FACTSHEET

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