

TLC Garden Tips - Garlic

Garlic can be planted between April and early spring. Choose a sunny position, dig the soil over finely, adding if possible some well-composted organic matter, but no fertilizer as such. Like onions and other members of the family, garlic will only succeed in an alkaline soil with a pH of up to 8, so you will almost certainly need to add lime to your soil prior to planting.

Don't overfeed the growing bulbs with manures or other fertilizers containing large amounts of nitrogen, as this will result in a large soft bulb with poor keeping qualities. Instead, aim for a 'complete' fertilizer containing plenty of phosphorous – **comfrey or weed tea is perfect**. Blood and bone can cause problems with maggots.

Plants should be ready to harvest about four or five months after planting, when the leaves start losing their colour and the plants start to fall over. The whole plant should be pulled up and left to dry in sunlight on the ground for about three weeks. Unless you seriously want to try to plait the plants by their dried leaves, the cloves can be detached, without skinning them, and stored in dark and dry corner somewhere until you're ready to use them

When selecting your planting position, be aware, however, that there are some plants, like humans, which find garlic positively repulsive. These include beans, peas, strawberries and members of the brassica family, such as cabbages.

Garlic planted under apple trees will protect them against apple scab, and likewise under peach and nectarine trees to help reduce leaf-curl. It will help fend mites off tomato plants, as well as helping to keep mosquitoes at bay.

Prepared by

Ian and Janet Pollock