

**Fraser's Garlic Farm**  
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## Growing, Harvesting and Preserving Garlic

### How To Grow Garlic

The first thing that we do is to choose the kind of garlic to grow. There are two basic types: hardneck (stiffneck or topset) and softneck. Within the two types there are many subspecies and varieties. Generally hardnecks will have cloves growing around a central woody stem and the flavor is usually hotter than the softnecks. Softnecks may have many cloves growing around a center clove or a large number of center cloves. Most of the garlic that you buy at the local supermarket is softneck and grown in California, China, Mexico and other parts of South America. Most of these do not grow well in northern climates.

The site that you choose for growing should be a sunny, well drained spot with a soil that has a fair amount of organic matter worked in. Clay and sands are OK, but the key is organic matter. It's also very important that the ph level is between 6.8 and 7.2.

For best results, planting should occur here in New York State after Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> and before Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>. You may also Spring plant, but the resulting heads are much smaller because the garlic did not have the opportunity to develop a good root system throughout the winter months.

Just before planting, split the cloves off from the head of garlic. Make a furrow 2 to 3 inches deep and plant each clove root tip down and at least 4 inches apart. You may use a high nitrogen fertilizer or compost at this point. Cover the clove and pile on 4 to 6 inches of dirt or mulch to help prevent heaving during the freezing winter months. The garlic will poke through in March. Keep the area weed free and in the first week of June your hardneck varieties will begin to grow a scape from the center of the top leaves. You should snap the scape off before it reaches a length of 12 inches. Once the scape is removed, the energy is forced into the formation of the head or bulb. Scares are edible, so do not throw them away.

### The Harvest

Softnecks tend to be ready first. You will notice some of the garlic will fall over and lay on the ground. That is a sign to harvest your softnecks and begin to check the hardnecks. The tips of the leaves of the hardnecks will begin to yellow and dry and you will notice that the sheath around the stem near the base will begin to loosen. This usually occurs during the first or second week of July.

Dig the garlic with a fork or shovel. It's OK to leave it on the ground for a day or two to dry, but make sure the temperature is below 90 degrees F. Pick up the garlic and shake off the dirt. The garlic will need to dry for a couple of weeks (or eaten at any time). To dry the garlic, place it in an area where there is plenty of air movement around the stems and heads. We use fans on ours.

### Preserving and Storing

There are many different ways to preserve your garlic. Cut it up and put it in the freezer for later use. Dehydrate and put through a coffee grinder to make powder. Keep loose in a bowl in a cool dark cupboard. **Place in a brown paper bag and put into the crisper of your refrigerator – this method has been working very well for people and allows for you to buy, store and eat fresh garlic for the whole year.** Braid it and hang it in the kitchen. Don't forget to pickle a little bit while you are at it. Storing garlic in oil in the refrigerator is not recommended as botulism can form.