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The Key to Fall Garlic Planting Success

Garlic is easy to grow, requires very little care, and is virtually untouched by insect pests. The perfect crop, even for beginner gardeners!

One of the amazing characteristics of garlic is that you can plant the seed in the fall to start the growth process that will be completed the following summer. Garlic is very hardy and many varieties don't perform at their best unless subjected to harsh winter weather conditions.

The timing of your fall planting is critical. Your objective is to time the fall garlic plantings so that the cloves have a few weeks to establish good root development before freezing weather conditions set in. Yet you don't want to plant the garlic seed so early that the seed cloves have time to send up above ground leaf shoots before cold temperatures halt the plant's growth.

If you get a little leaf growth before winter strikes don't worry, your garlic plants will be just fine. The formation of an established root system during the fall will prepare the garlic plants for an early emergence and promote rapid growth at the first signs of the arrival of spring.

Planting Your Garlic

A good rule of thumb is to plant the garlic seed about four to six weeks before the ground is subject to freezing in your growing region. Plant the garlic in a prepared raised bed that has been loosened and had a layer of compost, mushroom soil, or an organic fertilizer incorporated into it.

Don't separate the garlic bulbs that you're using for seed until just before you are ready to plant them in the garden. The end of the clove with the root scar which was attached to the bottom of the garlic bulb should be facing down when planted in the ground.

Dig deep in a full sun area and plant cloves 4-6 inches apart and 2 inches deep. Give them a thorough watering, and cover with 3-4 inches of mulch when the soil freezes. This covering will insulate the bed over the winter, help conserve moisture, and control weed growth in the spring. Fertilize with a balanced 10-10-10 fertilizer in the spring if needed. Garlic is ready to harvest when the foliage turns yellow in July.