

“Glorious Garlic”

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It's that time of year again - time to plant garlic that is. Garlic needs a sunny bed, but not too damp. Garlic is grown from individual cloves. Cloves are planted individually and upright, about 1-1/2 - 2 inches deep and 4 inches apart. Rows should be spaced 18 inches apart. Each clove will produce one plant with a single bulb which may have up to 20 cloves.

Garlic is harvested when the leaves, which look like green onion stalks, brown and die back. Harvest too early and the bulbs are small, too late and they split. Garlic will rot if not dried properly after harvest. Bulbs can be hung or spread on newspapers in a cool, dry place to cure, about 2-3 weeks or until skins become papery.

When storing garlic for future use, remember that it's a low-acid vegetable and should be preserved accordingly to prevent the growth of *Clostridium Botulinum* or botulism. Garlic can be stored at room temperature for about 3-5 months if kept in a cool, dry, well-ventilated place.

It can also be frozen. Chop or grind it, wrap tightly and break off pieces as needed. The cloves can be frozen whole if left unpeeled or peel and puree with oil. Use 2 parts oil to 1 part garlic and it will stay soft enough to use. To prevent botulism growth, never keep garlic-oil at room temperature.

For drying, peel fresh, unbruised cloves and slice lengthwise. Dry at 140 degrees for 3-4 hours or until dry and crisp.

Peeled cloves may be submerged in oil and stored in the freezer for 2-3 months or in the refrigerator for 3-4 weeks. Oil/garlic mixtures should never be stored at room temperature. The low acidity of the garlic and lack of free oxygen in the oil create the perfect environment for botulism spores to form. Thus, room temperature or extended refrigeration is risky.

Canning garlic is not recommended since garlic loses most of its flavor when heated. As a result, adequate processing times have not been established.

So plant your own garlic and enjoy the delicious rewards of your own gardening!

(Add tag line about MG training if space permits.)