



Over the Garden Fence



There's Never too much Garlic!

By Bob Labozetta (UC Master Gardener, Mariposa)

Garlic can be grown from September through March; however, October to November is considered the best time to plant. There are two basic types of garlic. **Hardneck** garlic varieties have hard, woody central stalks that extend down to the base of the bulb. They develop a long flowering stem called a scape that is edible. Curled and looped, they're tender and delicious. Harvest the scapes in early summer; otherwise, they'll weaken the plant, resulting in smaller heads.

Hardneck varieties produce fewer cloves, but they are uniform in size, peel easily and pack more flavor than softnecks. The bulbs do not store as well as softnecks and should be used within four to six months of harvest.

Softnecks perform better in warm climates or spring plantings. They store longer, lasting 9-12 months in ideal conditions. The bulbs have many cloves of varying size and do not develop a scape. Their stems remain flexible.

Purchase garlic bulbs from a quality seed company, local growers, garlic festivals, or your local farmer's market. Plant more than one variety and observe differences in pest and disease resistance as well as flavor.

Garlic prefers light, well-drained loamy soil, reasonably rich in organic content. If your soil contains a lot of clay, consider raised beds, pots or amendments to your soil. Use a digging fork to work a couple of inches of compost into the soil before planting.

To plant garlic, remove the outer papery skin then carefully separate individual cloves from the basal plate. Plant the cloves one to two inches deep, four to six inches apart in all directions with the pointed end up. Firm the soil and water the bed. Cover with a layer of straw, chopped leaves, or grass to protect from winter weather and control weeds. Move the mulch aside in early spring as the temperature begins to climb. Move the mulch back around the plants when the green tops emerge.

In early spring, consider side dressing the growing plants with a nitrogen fertilizer or aged compost when the soil warms to 50-55°F. Discontinue fertilization in late spring or bulb growth will be delayed.

Harvest garlic in June or July, when the leaves begin to yellow or brown and fall over, but there are still about or 50% green leaves on the plant. Dig garlic rather than pulling it. Using a digging fork, dig down about 5 inches into the soil, lift the bulb out, and shake off the soil.

UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County are located at 5009 Fairgrounds Rd., Mariposa. For more gardening and event information, visit our website (http://cemariposa.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener/) and Facebook page (UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County). UC Master Gardeners staff a Helpline serving Mariposa County, including Greeley Hill, Coulterville, and Lake Don Pedro (209-966-7078 or mgmariposa@ucdavis.edu). Listen to us on the radio at KRYZ 98.5 FM on Wednesdays at 2 pm and Saturdays at 5 pm.