

Growing Garlic

John Trim FNVS Southern Branch.

Garlic fall into two categories, keepers & those that must be used within a few weeks of harvest. The type that store are called soft neck garlic or longs. Those that have a short storage life are called hard neck or short garlic.

Best results are obtained from garlic planted in October & no later than the end of November. This is the ideal time for the garlic to develop a good root system before the onset of winter. In order for garlic to develop it's full potential it must then have a period of vernalisation, that is at least a month when the temperature is below 10c with a good set of roots.

Plant garlic in soil that has been treated with potash, hoe in a little nitrogen in March to help develop the leaves & then give a high potash feed once a month, Chempak No 8. If you have a supply of Comfrey leaves these can be laid as a mulch down each side of the row. They will provide an excellent source of potash as they rot down into the soil. (*see article in this issue from John on Comfrey- ed*)

Garlic can be planted up until the middle of January but in this instance I would start the bulbs off in pots to develop a root system before planting out in the open ground. Garlic planted after mid January are not likely to fully develop. Instead they will form what are called rounds. These should be lifted in July and stored for planting in October. The result will be extra large garlic the following year. (this is a technique often used by showmen).

Garlic should be sown with the tip of the bulb 2" below the soil surface. The soil should be light & free draining with a PH of not less than 6. They don't enjoy acid conditions. Neither do they like masses of rain & will not tolerate being waterlogged. Space the bulbs 8/10 inches apart in the row. The garlic is ready to harvest when the foliage turns yellow & dies down.

Elephant garlic is becoming very popular. Although in fact it is more closely related to the leek than true garlic. There is a type of elephant garlic called Babington's leek, they have been on sale in a popular supermarket but they are not the real thing. When you harvest an elephant garlic you will often find mini garlic bulbils attached to the base. Not less than three normally. Take the bulbils' off as soon as the garlic is put out to dry after harvesting in the summer. Check for any brown marks they may indicate rot then soak in fungicide for 5 minutes & plant in 3" pots. In late October they can be planted out.

If your elephant garlic is the Babington imposter the bulbils form at the leaf tips.

The best garlic is obtained from certified French stock, one of the best being 'Christo' for a long keeper.

If you retain your own stock of garlic for resowing each year, select the fat outside cloves. If the garlic has gone hard at the tip nip it off with scissors, give it 5 minutes in the fungicide then plant as normal.

Isle of Wight garlic farm have a large selection of soft neck & hard neck varieties.

John Trim



Garlic solent wight



Elephant garlic

