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Horticulture News

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Can you plant the garlic bought at the grocery store to use for cooking? The short answer is no. The type you commonly find at the grocery store is a softneck Silverskin variety. This type does not grow very well in Kansas. Most of the types we can grow successfully here are hardneck varieties.

If you want to plant garlic in your own garden here are some tips for success:

- Garlic does best in well-drained soil with high organic matter. If you have soil with low organic matter, or soil that is either sandy or heavy clay, add finished compost before planting to amend your soil.
- Plant cloves 6 inches apart.
 - If you're growing in beds, plant two rows per 30-inch bed.
 - If you're growing in larger raised beds or in the ground, leave about 1.5 feet between each row.
 - Planting closer together will result in more, but smaller heads.
 - Planting further apart will result in fewer, but larger heads.
- Plant your cloves pointed side up, cover with soil, and then top the soil with a thick layer of mulch until spring. This keeps the cloves protected during the winter.
- Make sure to water your garlic for a couple of weeks after planting to encourage it to form roots and a shoot.
- Look at your most recent soil test before planting. If it says you need phosphorus or potassium, go ahead and add it at the time of planting. If you have enough phosphorus and potassium but need nitrogen, just add a little bit of nitrogen fertilizer now (about 1/4 to 1/3 of your total N) and wait until spring to add the rest.

Harvest Time

Most garlic varieties will be ready to harvest in late June to mid-July. The best indicator of time to harvest is when 5 of the outermost leaves have yellowed and died. When 3 to 4 leaves have yellowed, discontinue watering.

Dig the whole plant with a garden fork and let dry in a shady spot with good air circulation for one day. Then brush the excess dirt from the bulbs and tie the plants in bunches.

Storage

When drying is complete, clip the roots short and trim the leaves, leaving about 1" of the neck. Store the dried bulbs in mesh bags in a cool, dry area. Ideal storage conditions are 50 degrees F with humidity less than 60%. For longer storage, place the bulbs in paper bags in the vegetable drawer of the refrigerator. The garlic will remain usable until February or March.