



Some Tips and To-Dos

Did you know? - You can freeze garlic!

- Just pop whole unpeeled heads in the freezer in freezer bags and then remove the individual cloves as you need them.
- You can also peel and chop or mash the cloves; freeze tightly wrapped in plastic then grate or break off what you need.
- Or peel and puree 2 parts garlic cloves and 1 part oil together in blender or food processor then freeze in small quantities.
- And the last idea, cover fresh peeled cloves in oil and store in freezer.

TO DO:

- Be on the lookout for tomato horn-worms, see your Growing Guide for more information and a picture.
- Grass clippings will keep soil moist during dry spells. Spread clippings between your plants but keep them away from stems.
- If you haven't done so already, harvest your garlic (see this issue for a tutorial)
- Plant lettuce, carrots, beets, and spinach for a fall harvest.
- Keep weeding and watering as needed!
- Attend to your "monsters" otherwise known as winter squash, (see this issue for the how to).



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What is that Monster in My Garden?!

If you haven't figured it out already, winter squash (butternut, acorn, delicata, pumpkins, etc.) take up a lot of room. If they seem to be taking over a garden bed, gently encourage them to run outside of your bed. You could also let them climb up your fence (and probably down the other side).



You might have to un-wind or cut some of the grabby curling tentacles they send out to help them cling, but don't worry, it won't damage the plant.



By now, you are likely to see some squashes forming on the vines. If you have any fruits on the part of the plant climbing up your trellis or fence, you can create a support or "sling" (just like you would do for a broken arm) out of cloth, mesh bags or old pantyhose.

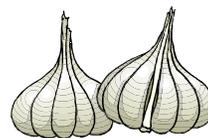


The fruits ripen on the vine for a long time, so don't pick them. None of them will generally be ready much before mid-to-late September. The nice thing about these squashes is that most of them can be stored for several months—hence the name "winter" squash. We'll write about this crop in a future issue.

- Growing Places Garden Project Team

Garlic

The easiest way to know when to harvest garlic is simply to look at the leaves. When the leaves are 1/3 brown, you will need to start testing the bulbs to see if they are the proper size. This is easy to do. Simply loosen the dirt above one or two garlic bulbs and get an idea of their size while still keeping them in the ground. If they look large enough, then you're ready to make your garden garlic harvest. If they are still too small, then your garlic will need to grow a bit more.



You don't want to wait too long though. Once the leaves get to be 1/2 - 2/3 brown, you should harvest the garlic regardless of size. Putting off harvesting garlic until after the leaves are completely brown will only result in an inedible bulb. Your garden garlic harvest will normally happen some time end of July or August.

Now that you know when to harvest garlic, you need to know how to harvest garlic. While it may seem like harvesting garlic is just a matter of digging the bulbs out of the ground, there are a few things to keep in mind. Dig, don't pull. When you are harvesting garlic, you need to dig it out of the ground. If you try to pull it out, you will only break the leaves off.

Be gentle. Freshly dug garlic bulbs will bruise easily and it is easy to accidentally slice a bulb open while digging if you are not careful. When harvesting garlic, lift each bulb individually from the ground. Place it in a container where it will not get jostled too much.

Get the garlic out of the sun as soon as possible. Garlic will blanch and burn in the sun. Put the freshly dug bulbs in a dark, dry place as soon as possible.

Now you know when to harvest garlic and how to harvest garlic. Really, the only thing left to do is eat your garden garlic harvest.



Tomato 101

They are sitting on the vine, bright red and plump, looking simply delicious—but is it the right time to pick them? Tomatoes can be a bit tricky since their colors vary so much and they are often ripe before they are uniform in color. Pick a tomato too early and it is hard and not very sweet or juicy—too late and it becomes tough and flat tasting.

Ripening of tomatoes begins at the bottom so that's a good place to start looking. If the skin of the tomato appears to be losing its waxy smoothness and the skin yields slightly to finger pressure, go ahead and harvest it. The shoulders (top) of the tomato are the last part to ripen and may not be the same color as the rest of the tomato, but that's OK. Store tomatoes at room temperature, otherwise they will lose some of their flavor. If they are overripe, go ahead and put them in the refrigerator. You can freeze tomatoes whole by rinsing, coring (removing the stem) and freezing on a cookie sheet. Once frozen, store in a Ziploc bag in freezer and use them for soups and sauces.

Some final thoughts: Remove tomatoes that have fallen to the ground since rotting fruit will create disease and attract insects that might affect the tomatoes on the plant. And most importantly—enjoy!!!

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