

When Do I Plant Garlic?

Spring or Fall, when is best?



There is often a lot of confusion of when the best time is to plant garlic in South Dakota. That is a great question! The answer is while, technically you can plant either time, fall is indeed the best time. However, if you choose to plant in the spring make sure you are planting the correct type!

Types of Garlic

Primarily there are two types of garlic, hardneck and softneck.

- **Hardneck**-this type is the hardier type that we plant in the fall. The center stem of the clove is very hard-hence its name. Hardneck types tolerate cool, damp spring conditions. The flavor of hardneck garlic can be hotter, using them in roasting will tame the heat and enhance the nutty flavor. Some common varieties of hardneck garlic include; Music, Italian and Russian Red.
- **Softneck**- is your typical grocery store type. Softneck garlic is often used in garlic braids. The flavor of softneck varieties tend to be more mild. Many varieties are not hardy in South Dakota so if grown here, they are usually planted in the spring. California is a common variety to plant in the spring.



How to Plant Garlic

Garlic is a very easy plant to grow. When planting in the fall, wait until the soil temp is no warmer than 50 degrees. Till the soil to at least 8 inches, as garlic does not like hard soil, and it will prevent the garlic bulb from getting large. Tilling in compost will increase drainage and add organic material to the area.

Break apart the garlic bulb so you plant each clove individually. Do not peel the clove as this could cause fungal growth. Place cloves 4-5" apart and plant them about 4-5" deep. Water the area, but do not fertilize.

After the ground has frozen, you may want to cover the area with straw to protect the area from thawing and freezing .

As the ground thaws in the spring, remove the straw, and cut off any flower stalks that may grow. Continue to water the plants as needed, do not allow them to go into a droughty period. When the greens of the plants start to turn yellow, you can start to harvest your garlic. Allow your garlic bulbs to cure for 2 weeks before using. Garlic can be stored for several months if they are stored in a cool dry location.