

Tips to plant your garlic bulbs in your biodynamic garden

Garlic is good for health of people, animals and the garden and relatively easy to grow.

Types of garlic:

There are two types of garlic grown in the UK, hard neck varieties and soft neck varieties. Soft neck varieties keep the longest as a general rule.

Soft neck garlic also produces more individual cloves but they are smaller compared with hard neck garlic. Hard neck varieties are said to have a deeper, richer flavour, however that depends greatly on your taste buds and what you enjoy most.

Weather conditions:

Both hard neck and soft neck garlic seem to grow equally well in the colder and warmer climates in the UK.

Soil Conditions:

The best prerequisite for most successful growing is to grow garlic in a well-drained, slightly light soil. If you have a heavy soil prepare it well now by digging in lots of well-rotted biodynamic compost and preferably also some sharp horticultural sand which will improve drainage. This is also a good time of year to stir a pinch of Mäusdorfer Starter (or barrel preparation) in the afternoon into 2 litres of lukewarm rain water for 20 minutes and apply it in droplet form on the soil.

Timing for planting:

With the moon going into the constellation of the Virgin next Thursday, it might be a good idea to get your garlic bed ready as described above and then plant the first cloves on Thursday or next Friday, the 13th October.

The earliest and largest garlic is grown in the UK by planting it late autumn.

Plant cloves outside in autumn / winter – best time being the last week of October until the third week of November (UK average). The advantage is that the roots grow deeper and the cloves split properly to then produce abundant growth in Spring.

Plant cloves in pots / for spring planting - the last week of November (UK average). With the climate change I now plant every month in succession right through the winter. The last few years they did really well.

Planting cloves outside in spring - the last week of February to the second week of March (UK average) is also possible.

Transplant garlic outside - the first week of April from the pots into the ground.

I personally recommend to plant garlic cloves in the autumn for best yields and healthy plants. This year I would err on planting it earlier rather than later as we may well get cold nights all through the autumn with early frosts? Otherwise better wait until late winter for planting.

How to plant:

The top of the bulb should be just below the surface of the soil or with a tiny part protruding. Don't let too much be visible (if any) above the soil surface because birds love to pull them out of the ground.

Individual cloves should be planted 12cm / 5in apart and rows of garlic should be 45cm / 18in apart. Make sure you plant the garlic in the afternoon with the moon in a root constellation when it is descending, which is the constellation of the Virgin in the coming weeks. Apply the horn manure preparation after planting to enhance rooting and rapid growth before the frost set in.

If you ask yourself: Can I buy my garlic bulbs to plant out from a supermarket? Yes, you could do that, but this has two main disadvantages. The garlic probably won't have been grown in the UK and the variety may well not be suitable for our climate.

Secondly, the bulb will almost certainly have been treated with chemicals of some sort which may well affect its ability to grow well. (It may even have been gamma rayed so that it won't start growing on the shop shelf.) So buy a bulb or two from an organic seller and use the best cloves to plant out.

There is no food which tastes quite the part without some garlic and in these challenging times it is the best blood thinner and immune system booster. So soft-neck for best keeping qualities and hard-neck for more flavour.

Happy planting
Hans-Günther

Next week I will give some hints on crop protection with possible and imminent first frosts in middle of October, particularly with the moon going into the cold earth constellation of the Virgo.



