Planting Garlic in the Fall

Wellington Garden Club Meeting

Sept. 22nd, 2026



Best Planting Window (Zone 6a)

- **Plant cloves in mid-October to early November.** Soil should be cool, not warm — planting too early causes premature top growth; planting too late risks weak root establishment.
- Ohio-specific guidance confirms **October–November** is the correct window.



Best Garlic Types for Zone 6a

- Hardneck varieties thrive in cold climates and develop the strongest flavor.
- **Music** — large cloves, excellent flavor, very cold-hardy.
- **German Extra Hardy** — robust flavor, easy-to-peel porcelain type.
- **Carpathian / Spanish Roja** — strong, spicy hardneck types noted for Zone 6a performance.
- Softneck options (Inchelium Red, California Early) grow fine but are milder and better for long storage.
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Soil Prep for Big Bulbs

- Garlic needs:
- **Well-drained soil** — raised beds help if your soil holds water.
- **Organic matter** — compost + aged manure boosts fertility.
- **pH 6.0–8.0** — garlic is flexible but prefers neutral-leaning soil.
- Before planting:
- Loosen soil 8–10" deep.
- Mix in 2–3" of compost.
- Avoid fresh manure (too “hot”).

Planting Depth & Spacing

- Break bulbs into individual cloves.
- Plant **pointed end up**, **2 inches deep**, **4–6 inches apart**.
- Space rows 8–12 inches apart

Mulching — Critical Step in Zone 6a

- After your **first hard freeze**, mulch with **3–4 inches of straw**. This insulates cloves, prevents freeze-thaw heaving, and stabilizes moisture.

Spring Care (March–May)

- **Remove mulch** when shoots appear (March).
- **Side-dress with nitrogen** once in May as bulbs begin sizing.
- Keep soil evenly moist but never soggy.

Scapes (Hardneck Only)

- Hardneck garlic sends up **scapes in late May–June**.
- **Remove scapes** as soon as they curl — this redirects energy to bulb formation.



Harvest Timing

- Harvest **late June to early July** when the **bottom 3–4 leaves turn brown** but upper leaves are still green.
- Zone-wide guidance: harvest by **July 1** for best bulb size.



Pests to Watch (Ohio-Specific)

- **Thrips**
- **White Rot** Companion planting with **tomatoes or roses** helps deter pests.

Curing & Storage

- Hang bulbs in a warm, shaded, airy place for **3–4 weeks**.
- Hardneck stores **6–10 months**; softneck up to **10+ months**.
- You can dehydrate cloves to make powder
- Ferment or pickle



