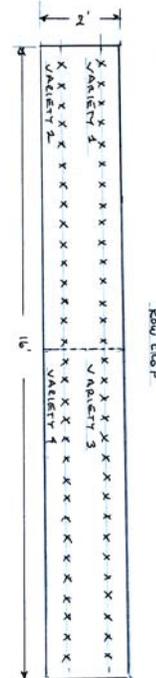
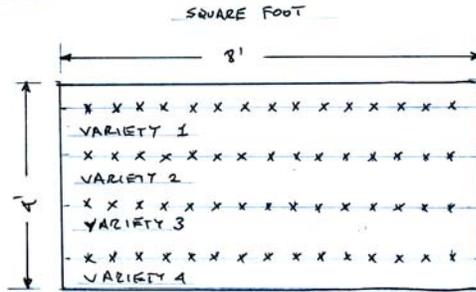


**Growing Garlic in the Home Garden**  
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The steps below outline the procedure for growing garlic in a home garden, either square foot or row crop, in New England.

1. Garden preparation

- a. Plan out your square foot or row crop garden. We usually space



plants 12" apart across the bed and 6" apart along the length of the bed. The layouts shown above and to the right will allow planting of four varieties of 15 plants each. Assuming that you will hold 3-4 bulbs for next year's planting this scheme would provide 11-12 bulbs of each variety for eating, a total of 48 which is a pretty good stash for a couple of adults and maybe kids if they like garlic.

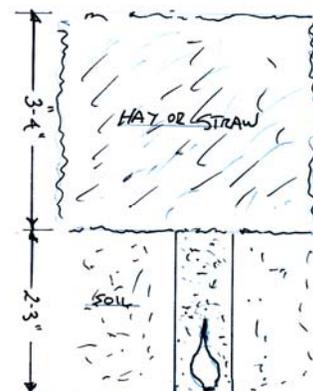
- b. Rototill or dig your garden at the end of summer in preparation for the fall planting.  
 c. Amend the soil with compost, composted manure, or a good organic fertilizer. Additional nitrogen such as fish meal, fish emulsion, alfalfa meal or blood meal can help if these amendments are available.

2. Seed preparation

- a. Be sure to keep your varieties separate all during the planting process.  
 b. Break apart the bulbs into cloves. We usually store the cloves in an empty yogurt container marked with the variety name.  
 c. Set aside each variety in preparation for planting.

3. Planting

- a. Planting date will vary with your latitude. In mid-coast Maine we usually plant the third week in October. If you are further south you would plant later. Further north you would plant earlier. The key is to get some growth of the cloves in the fall but not so much that they poke above the ground. If they do poke out a bit the straw will probably buffer any frost damage.  
 b. Mark the location of your rows in your bed using a rake handle or string line.  
 c. Dibble (a dibble is a tool to dig a cylindrical hole) a hole in your rows for each clove that you plan to plant. Plan to bury the cloves at least 1" to 2" deep. Thus if you cloves are 1" in length you will need a dibble hole 2" to 3" deep. You may buy a dibble at a garden center or make one using PVC pipe or any cylindrical object.  
 d. Mark your rows in advance with the variety name that you plan to plant in that row so you won't lose track. Garlic cloves often look very much the same.  
 e. Plant the cloves with the point side up. (see diagram to the right)  
 f. Rake soil over the planted cloves to bury.



- g. Place straw or second cut hay over the buried cloves for the winter. The straw provides insulation during the winter and mulches out weeds in the spring.
4. Plant care and cultivation
    - a. In the spring the plants will push their way through the straw. If winter winds have left bare spots it would be best to cover them with more straw to save weeding later.
    - b. When the plants are 4" to 6" high sprinkle fertilizer along the base of the plants. The material should percolate down through the straw with rain. If liquid is easier than dried fertilizer use fish emulsion.
    - c. Be sure to pull any weeds that break through the straw. Garlic doesn't compete well with weeds.
  5. Scape harvest
    - a. In June hardneck varieties will put out a flower shoot called a "scape." When the scape is a few inches long it should be cut off. This can be accomplished with a pair of scissors.
    - b. Scapes can be used in stir fry and other dishes and have a mild garlic flavor. Look up scape recipes on the Internet.
    - c. Softneck varieties don't usually have scapes, but sometimes they do. So if softnecks develop scapes trim them off as well.
    - d. Experience has shown that bulbs are 20% bigger if the scapes are removed.
    - e. Continue to monitor for weeds and when they appear pull them.
  6. Bulb harvest preparation
    - a. When the tops of the plants begin to turn brown they are getting ready for harvest. Another signal that the plants are ready to harvest is an unremoved scape pointing straight up. Sometimes the tops will be brown in the spring. This is usually because of a hard winter and not because the garlic is ready for harvest. Keep an eye on the lower leaves. We find in Montville, Maine that garlic is ready for harvest between the second week in July and the first week in August. This is heavily dependent on the weather. By the way, it is best to harvest garlic in dry weather, so wait for a dry day to harvest.
    - b. Mark a separate bin or box for each of your garlic varieties with the name of that variety. Garlic plants look very similar so don't lose track. Plan for a place to dry your garlic. The best is a cool, dry well ventilated place that doesn't get sun such as the inside of a barn or shed. A continuously running fan will speed up the drying process.
  7. Garlic harvest
    - a. Using a fork loosen the soil next to the bed working from the outside in. Be careful to stay far enough away from the bulbs so you don't pierce them. They won't store well if they are injured. Injured bulbs should be dried and eaten in September.
    - b. Work one variety at a time. Pull the bulbs placing them in your marked containers. Brush off the dirt from the roots. Cleaning will take place later after the bulbs have dried. Do not wash the bulbs. They won't store well if you wash them.
    - c. Don't leave freshly picked garlic outside. Get it right into the barn or shed where you plan to store it.
    - d. We have found the best way to dry garlic is to lay it flat on a ventilated surface, either slotted boards or hardware cloth (1/4" wire mesh). Some people hang the garlic in bunches on the side of a barn. We cut the tops off the garlic in the field, leaving a 1/2" stem, so we are required to dry them flat on hardware cloth.
  8. Selecting seed for next year
    - a. Separate the best bulbs for next year's seed.
    - b. Place your seed stock into separate marked paper or net bags by variety.
    - c. You may choose to clean your seed garlic. If so, follow the procedure below.
  9. Cleaning and storage
    - a. If you haven't already done so, cut off the tops of the garlic about 1/2" above the bulb.
    - b. With a pair of sharp scissors cut off the garlic roots.
    - c. Remove one layer of skin to reveal the beauty of the bulb beneath as well as any remaining dirt. Minimize the number of bulb layers that you peel since the more layers remaining, the better the bulb will store. A dull paring knife will facilitate skin removal.
    - d. Place the bulbs in paper or net bags and store in a cool dry place for use in cooking winter and hopefully into the spring.