



GROWING GARLIC GREENS

Fall is the best time to plant garlic cloves in your garden so they can start growing over the winter for two harvests next summer. What do you do with the not so perfect garlic cloves that you don't plant, try growing garlic plants any time of the year in an indoor garden on a sunny windowsill, and harvest the greens all winter.

Garlic is harvested in midsummer, and the cloves store well in a cool, dark location for up to six months. If you're buying garlic out of season, the cloves were most likely shipped a long way, using fossil fuels to ship and the sprayed with chemicals to keep them from sprouting. Growing garlic plants indoors allows you to harvest your own local garlic greens. The greens are like scallions with a strong garlic overtone.

Use 'non perfect cloves'

Use small or shattered garlic bulbs (bulbs that are pulled apart or are just starting to burst from being left in the field too long) Don't use the leftover garlic in your cabinet that's dried up; it's dead and won't grow.

Plant Your Cloves

Get a four-inch pot (or a quart yogurt container with some drain holes poked in the bottom), potting soil, and a saucer or tray to catch drips.

Fill the pot with soil within ½ inch of the top, gently break the garlic bulbs into individual cloves (leave the peel on each one intact, but don't worry if it splits a little), and push each individual segment, pointy end up, about an inch deep into the soil, planting perhaps 12 cloves close together. Place the pot on the saucer, water well, and put in a sunny spot. Water as needed.

Harvest Your Greens

In a week or so, the first green noses will start poking out of your garlic plants. Once the greens are 8 to 10 inches tall (a few more weeks), clip off what you need with scissors, and use in any recipe that calls for garlic or scallions. You will get several cuttings before the cloves stop putting up more sprouts. Empty the pot into the compost, refill with fresh potting soil, and plant it up with new cloves. Plant a second pot about the time you harvest the first cuttings from pot number one, and pot number two should be ready to harvest about the time the first pot is winding down.

Use 'Em Up

Try minced garlic greens (raw or sautéed) with mashed or baked potatoes instead of chives, chop the meaty bases into stir-fry instead of scallions, or try this delicious pesto recipe:

Garlic Green Pesto

1 cup of garlic greens, chopped (or mix half garlic greens with half parsley or spinach for a milder pesto)
¼ cup hard cheese, grated (Parmesan or other hard cheese)
¼ cup nuts (pine nuts or walnuts)
¼ cup olive oil
Salt to taste

Grind ingredients together in a mini food processor or with a mortar and pestle until you get the texture you prefer. This pesto sauce is yummy tossed with hot whole-grain pasta, or spread on rounds of a good chewy sourdough and toasted under the broiler until hot.