Growing garlic from cloves

Plant a healthy clove in compost for garlic greens or try growing a full bulb outdoors.

What you need

• Firm, healthy garlic cloves

• A pot at least 20cm deep with drainage holes

• Peat-free compost, water and a sunny spot

Step by step

1. Choose seed garlic for the best chance of a full bulb. Shop garlic may be unsuitable for the UK climate or carry disease.

2. Separate cloves without peeling them. Discard any that are soft or mouldy.

3. For outdoor bulbs, plant in autumn or late winter in free-draining compost. Set each clove pointed end up, about 2.5cm below the surface and 15cm apart.

4. Water during dry spells but avoid waterlogging. An outdoor spot usually works better than a warm windowsill for bulb formation.

5. For greens, snip a small amount after leaves develop. For bulbs, leave the leaves to feed the plant, then lift when foliage starts to yellow in summer and dry in an airy place.

Make this project work for you

How long it takes

Garlic greens can develop in 2 to 4 weeks. A full bulb commonly takes 6 to 9 months, depending on planting time and variety.

What you can realistically expect

A clove may give useful greens even if it never forms a large bulb. Bulb production needs suitable varieties, enough cold and a long growing season.

Safety and hygiene

Discard mouldy cloves and do not keep compost saturated. Wash greens before use and dry harvested bulbs thoroughly before storage.

A different way to do it

Use a pot positioned at a comfortable working height. You can grow greens in a small pot if moving or maintaining a larger outdoor container is inconvenient.

Gardening is for everyone

You don’t need a big garden, expensive equipment or years of experience. Whether you can spend hours gardening or just a few minutes a week, there’s something you can grow. Whether you do everything yourself or have someone help you, you’re a gardener. You’re welcome here.

General UK guidance. Results vary with light, temperature, variety and care. Start small and ask for help whenever it suits you.

Questions? Growsmartuk@gmail.com