



## *Lara Farm French Island*

### **Garlic Harvesting & Curing Guide**

Its been a long time since you planted your garlic cloves and your nearly at the finish line. Hopefully you have a lovely stand of garlic plants and your wondering how your going to decide when to harvest your bulbs. Garlic takes anywhere between 6 – 8 months to grow and mature into bulbs, depending on climate, planting time, soil preparation and care of the plants during growth.

As with all plants they send out signs and you need to be aware of how to read their language.

There are two basic types of garlic amongst the 100 plus different cultivars, hard necked and soft necked.

The "neck" in the names refers to the stalk that grows upward from the garlic bulb. Hardnecks have a stalk (scape) that stems from the center of the bulb and turns rigid at maturity. Softnecks stalks are made up of leaves rather than a central stalk. Softneck leaves remain soft and flexible at maturity. Soft necked cultivars do not produce scapes.

Hard necked cultivars usually produce scapes, these are their version of a flower.



We harvest the scapes within approximately a week after emerging. The reason is two fold, the scapes provide a culinary experience all of their own from pesto to salads, stir fried, pickled or frozen for later use, their use is only limited by your imagination and

cooking skills. Secondly with the scapes removed the garlic plant then devotes all of its energy into producing larger bulbs.

## **The Signs That You Need to Read**

### **Hard Necked**

- Scapes are a signal that your hard necked garlic is getting ready to be harvested. After most of the scapes are cut set the timer for harvesting in approximately 20 days.

### **Soft Necked**

- As a general rule most garlic plants have between 7 – 9 leaves. When the lowest leaves turn yellow and start to brown but the highest or top three leaves are still green then its time to carefully dig up one of your bulbs to check for full development.
- When you notice the tips of the foliage browning off and the leaves start to wither indicating that the plant is cutting back on its nutrient uptake then its time to carefully dig up one of your bulbs for full development.

## **Harvesting**

Hopefully it's a nice sunny day when you have planned to harvest your garlic. Try to plan for the soil to be as dry as possible. Dig around your garlic bulb to loosen the soil and carefully lift the bulb out. Take some care with this procedure, avoid bruising or damaging the bulb. You can use a hearth brush to carefully remove loose soil from the bulbs and roots. Step 1 Lay all of your plants, leaves and roots intact, spaced out in a dry warm place out of the direct sun.

## **Curing**

You have already successfully started the curing process if you followed the previous step. After one week its time to proceed with Step 2.

Cut all of the roots to leave about 2 inch of length.

You can now plait your garlic in bunches while the stalks are still supple.

Your garlic now needs to be hung up to further cure. Either end up doesn't matter!

There are as many different methods to hang your garlic as there is cultivars.

You can tie string around the stem and hang from the verandah rafters or spread out on an old spring bed, on chicken wire to wine glass holders. The main point is get it off the ground, have good air circulation, keep it dry and keep it out of direct sunlight.



As an example we have made purpose built racks that mimic wine glass holders that you may see in a restaurant or pub.

It is now the beginning of week five and time to finish the trimming process.

The stalks on your bulbs should have browned off nicely by now and its time to cut back all of the roots to stubble, approximately 1/8 – 1/4 of an inch or 2 – 4mm and Cut the stalks off to leave approximately 4 inches in length. (unless plaited)

The garlic curing isn't quite finished yet, another two weeks left to hang and your all done and dusted ☺. Time to store your garlic. Nice cool dark ventilated spot but whatever you do NOT in the refridgerator! Not even in an old drink refridgerator that's not plugged in! Garlic is alive and it needs air around it, it will sweat and go mouldy if you seal it up in any way. This is where you need to take the wheel and hunt down your own storage spot.

Enjoy your worlds best garlic, appreciate it for what it truly is and don't eat it all!

As disappointing as it may sound you need to keep your best and biggest bulbs to plant next season. One day all planets aligning, all of your bulbs will be the biggest and the best, what to do with all of that lovely garlic? Don't blame me! What a nice problem to have ☺

