

There are two kinds. **Softneck** garlic has more, smaller cloves and keeps longer. **Hardneck** garlic has fewer, bigger cloves and a stronger flavour, but it doesn't keep as long, about four to six months. I grow some of each. 'Solent Wight' is a softneck variety with the Award of Garden Merit, a mark given to plants judged to perform well in UK gardens.

Walter's way

- 1 **Pick a deep pot.** At least 25cm deep. A builders' bucket is ideal. Drill it and stand it on bricks (Chapter 2).
- 2 **Fill with peat-free compost.** Multi-purpose is fine. I mix in a bit of garden compost.
- 3 **Split the bulb.** Break the bulb into cloves the day you plant, not before. Use the biggest cloves. Cook the little ones.
- 4 **Plant pointy end up.** Space the cloves about 15cm apart. Push each one in so the tip is about 2.5cm below the surface.
- 5 **Water in, then leave it.** The compost should be moist, not wet. Over winter, the rain often does the watering. Check in dry spells.
- 6 **Water in dry springs.** Garlic needs water in spring and early summer while the bulbs swell. Stop watering once the bulbs are near ready.
- 7 **Snap off flower stems.** Hardneck garlic sends up a curly flower stem in early summer. Snap it off so the plant puts its effort into the bulb. Irene fries them.
- 8 **Lift when the leaves yellow.** When most of the leaves have turned yellow, ease the bulbs out with a hand fork.
- 9 **Dry them well.** Lay them out in a single layer somewhere sunny and dry, or in the greenhouse, for two to four weeks. Then store them somewhere cool and dry.

Watch for orange spots on the leaves. That's rust, a fungal disease that garlic and leeks both get. If it spreads, look it up before it gets worse.