



Zion Farmers Market KidCraft

Garlic Greens in a Can



An all time favorite kid-friendly projects is growing garlic greens indoors. One of the best things about this project is having garlic greens to cook with in the winter, which is a luxurious treat for parents. Garlic greens are delicious--you can snip off the shoots as they grow and have a sweet, garlic-y green to add to salads or as a garnish for soups.

This project does take a little patience as it takes awhile for the garlic to grow. Fortunately it is worth the wait and once the shoots emerge they grow quickly.

Supplies

Potting mix

A container, coffee can or flower pot

Can opener, or hammer and large nail if you are using can

A head of garlic – It's ok if it has already started to sprout, though you want it to be firm and check that there is no rot

Instructions

If you are using a can or another container without drainage, you will need to make holes, so the water can get out. You can make several large holes with a can opener, or use a hammer and large nail to punch them. If you are using a ceramic container, that doesn't already have drainage holes you can drill holes with a special ceramic bit.

If your drainage holes are large, you will need to cover them to keep the soil in and let water out so your plants don't drown. I use plastic window screening cut to fit (more or less) the bottom of the can. You can also cover the bottom with paper towel or a coffee filter.

Fill the container with potting soil so the surface is about 2 inches below the rim.

Split your garlic head into cloves by prying it open. You want to keep as much of the skin on as possible, though it's ok to brush off some of the dry papery stuff

Make sure the pointy part of the garlic clove is facing up and the side that was at the bottom of the head faces down.

Plant cloves, pointy side up in your container, poking them about half way down into the soil. You can plant them fairly close together, but make sure they are not touching. Fill container with potting soil until the soil totally covers the garlic by about a half inch, making sure to fill in all the spaces between the cloves. Pat the soil down gently. Water gently and slowly until water come out of the bottom.

Add more soil if you see any garlic cloves poking through the soil.



Caring for your Garlic Indoors

Water your garlic pot often enough so the soil stays moist, but not wet. In about a week or two you should see garlic shoots coming through the soil. Wait until they get a couple of inches tall before you start snipping them with a scissors. Leave about an inch of shoot on each clove so the shoot will continue to grow.

Garlic Facts for Kids

Hi, there. Nice to meet you. Are you a garlic lover? Yes? No? You see, people are either for us or against us -there seems to be no middle ground. It's because of 'garlic breath', of course, but we can't help that - it just happens to some people after they've eaten us. We admit it can be bad but it's not our fault and anyway the benefits of eating us far outweigh this minor social problem. The answer is, of course, for everyone to eat us, then no one would notice the smell.

You know we don't just make food taste great, we're really good for you too. It's said that we have powers to keep you strong and healthy. The ancient Egyptians knew this. They fed us to their slaves each morning so they would have the strength to build the great pyramids! Perhaps you should eat us before your next forty or netball game.

We're related to the onion with a similar squat vase shape. We consist of a bulb about 4-6cm across, with a fat, plump bottom which tapers to a thin neck. Each bulb consists of a cluster of 6-

12 smaller cloves around a central core. Each clove is enclosed in thin papery sheaths with the whole cluster wrapped in another papery sheath. We can be white, greyish or purplish.

Availability

We're available all year round with our best value being from May to August.

Did you know?

- Eating garlic can help to keep mosquitoes away
- We're a member of the lily family but are often called the 'pungent rose'
- We grow wild as a root in southern Italy and parts of France
- The sulphur compounds in garlic only become active when the garlic is crushed or cut. You can test this by smelling a clove of garlic and then cutting it and smelling it again. It smells quite different when cut because oxygen has changed some of the sulphur compounds
- As I mentioned, we do leave an odour on your breath, but anyone who has also eaten garlic will not be able to smell it, so eating us may need to become a communal activity. Some people claim that chewing parsley removes 'garlic breath', but this rarely works.

Varieties

We're usually sold as single bulbs by colour or place of origin - not by variety.

Why Garlic is Good to Eat

- If you eat only small amounts of garlic – like 1-2 cloves in the family dinner, we can't supply you with many nutrients, but if you eat lots of us, we could give lots of dietary fibre, potassium, iron, zinc and vitamin C
- We have some sulphur compounds that scientists believe are very good for our health. Some of these change when we're cooked and the top benefits seem to come from eating both cooked and raw garlic.
- 100 grams has 520 kJ – but eating that much could be difficult. A clove of garlic might weigh only a few grams.

How Garlic is Grown and Harvested

As I told you, we look like an onion plant. A long stem with thin, grey-green, flat leaves rises from our bulb and we can grow to 1 metre or more in height in the right environment. We prefer wintry conditions and need a moist, well-drained soil when first planted.

As the days get warmer we grow and mature so that 6-9 months after being planted our leaves start to droop and dry out. We're then pulled from the ground (usually by machine) and our tops cut off, leaving the bulb which is cleaned and packed for transport to the markets.

Choosing Garlic

For pungent, easy to peel cloves select those of us with large, plump, firm, dry bulbs.

How to Keep Garlic

Store us in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place. Quality garlic keeps for months.

History of Garlic

We're an ancient plant, having been cultivated for food and as a medicine for thousands of years. The Egyptians used us as far back as 3750 BC and we were eaten in China from about 2000 BC. It's thought that we came from the mountains of Central Asia and from there we were probably spread by travellers and traders to China, India, Egypt and the Mediterranean. We were used by the Greeks and Romans for at least 2500 years. The Romans were probably responsible for our arrival in the British Isles.

We have become an important ingredient in Australian cuisine since the arrival of European and, then, Asian immigrants.

Fun Ways to Eat and Cook Garlic

We can be added to just about any savoury dish as a seasoning and can also be eaten raw. We can be used to rub salad bowls and bread to impart a light garlic flavour to food. It's said we help prevent colds when used often.

We can be baked whole or chopped and added to sauces, butters, casseroles, roasts, soups, dips, eggs, vegetables and salads. Be careful not to cook us too long or at too high a temperature if pan-frying as a bitter flavour may develop.

After breaking our bulb into 'cloves' the skin is removed and the base trimmed before use.