

## Year Round Gardening

# **Expand the repertoire, with fall planted shallots**

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Last autumn on a whim I ordered some French grey shallots to plant for summer harvest. I have grown fall planted garlic for many years with success and thought adding shallots might be fun. Shallots, like garlic are in the Allium genus, which also includes onions and chives. They are true bulbs, and can be planted in autumn for early summer harvest. They can also be planted in the spring for a summer harvest.

True bulbs like onions can grow in two different ways. Onions grow by increasing the size of the single bulb planted. Shallots are like garlic in that when you plant a clove, it grows by forming multiple cloves, each with a papery wrapper. However, unlike garlic there is no papery cover that creates a 'head'. The cloves form a cluster. Shallots have a mild onion flavor, with a bit of garlic pungency. They are a good addition to your pantry. If kept in a cool, dry environment they will last several months.

Purchase the initial shallot bulbs for planting at a garden center if possible. Grocery store shallots have probably been treated to deter sprouting, and they may not grow. If you must use grocery store cloves, try to purchase organic shallots to increase the chance they will sprout. Planting should be done 4-6 weeks before a hard frost. In the Pikes Peak region that will be early to mid-October, about the same time you would plant daffodils and tulips. In future years, you can replant your shallots from the prior year harvest.

Before planting make sure your bed is weed free and well cultivated. Shallots prefer slightly acidic, rich in organic matter, well-drained soil. Raised beds are a good choice in our region.



Full sun exposure is optimum, while they may grow in part sun, bulb size will likely be reduced with less sun. I do not think that deer will eat these plants, however I had a very persistent rabbit try to nest amongst my shallots. I had to install a rabbit barrier (a buried hardware cloth perimeter) to stop the hole digging and filling wars. So be aware that critters might find this nice, soft soil appealing for their maternity wards and you may need to protect your crop with a physical barrier.

To plant, gently separate the cloves from the cluster, it is not necessary to peel the cloves. Plant each clove pointy side up 1-2" deep and 6-8" apart. The tip should be almost at the surface of the soil. The cloves should be covered with soil, then mulched with leaves, wood chips (avoid aspen or poplar leaves) or straw. Keep the area moist even through the winter (if there is snow on the bed that is sufficient.) The bulbs will probably sprout in the fall, that is not a problem they should still survive the winter. In spring when the bulbs have started growing, fertilize regularly and keep the area weed free. The bulbs will be harvested in early July when the foliage starts to dry out or falls over. When harvesting be careful to lift clusters carefully so bulbs are not damaged during harvest. Damaged bulbs may not be usable after drying.

After harvesting, dry or cure the shallots in a warm, dry, well-ventilated location, such as a shed or garage. Spread out the shallots in a single layer on a clean, dry surface. Cure the shallots for two to three weeks until the tops and necks are thoroughly dry. Once cured move them to a cool, preferably dark environment for storage. Enjoy this unique vegetable all autumn and winter.

*When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. Get answers to your horticulture questions by visiting [ask.extension.org](http://ask.extension.org) any time day or night. You can also call 719-520-7684 or email [CSUmq2@elpasoco.com](mailto:CSUmq2@elpasoco.com).*

Want more information on growing shallots?

Go to <http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/homegardening/scene83de.html>