

Preserving/Growing Garlic and other things!

Carole Demers

Altitude: 1200 feet, south slope, Hidden Hills Subdivision, North Fork Loop Rd

Recommended Books: Putting Food By -Hertzberg, Vaughn and Greene

Garlic: I have been growing a variety of hardy garlics for about 5-6 years in Homer. I order my seed from the organic Filaree Garlic Farms in Okanagan, WA online or from their catalog. They have a wealth of information in their catalog and hundreds of varieties of garlic. They also sell great garlic planting books and will help you decide how much to order.

I fall plant(early-mid Oct.) with lots of compost, manure, kelp powder sprinkled over the beds, and fish bone meal in south-facing raised beds. **Garlic likes a very rich soil.** It is recommended that you leave 8-9" between rows and 4-5" between cloves. I dig trenches about 4 inches deep the length of the bed and push the cloves into the bottom of the trench lightly and cover with soil. I break apart the bulbs as I plant. I then sprinkle the beds with kelp powder before I mulch.

It is best to mulch right away with at least one or two layers. I then add more layers of mulch as I clean out the garden. I mulch heavily (8-12) inches, first with a layer of old pea vines, then a layer of comfrey, then any garden material you have and finally with a layer of rotted hay, if needed for depth. Watch that the hay is really rotted well, or you will add grass seed to your beds! **Mulching is critical to insure that you do not lose your seed garlic over the winter.** I have wooden raised beds and like to make 5 rows for vegetables. I plant all 5 rows with garlic, or sometimes save the outer rows on one or two sides for spinach, beets, turnips or carrots.

In early May, I peel the mulch off, and they are usually already growing above the surface of the soil. However some years they have not broken the surface of the soil or one year they hadn't even sprouted! That year had a very cold fall with an early freeze. Regardless of their stage of development by May 1, I have had good gardening results. I put the mulch in my compost pile, except for the comfrey and pea vines. I crumble them for mulch, once they have dried out under the remay, and put it between the rows to maintain even moisture throughout the summer. **Garlic likes evenly moist soils.**

I cover the PVC hoops that are attached permanently to the wooden raised bed boxes with agricultural remay that has been attached to 2X4s with lath, so it doesn't blow away to protect them from the frost. I purchase mine from the Anchor Point Greenhouse off large rolls. I take this off the beds when the tops of

the garlic touch the remay-usually in early July. If we are having a warm summer, you might want to take it off sooner. I roll it on the 2X4s, dry and store in a shed. It lasts for many years this way. You can plant garlic without wooden beds, but need a way to keep the remay off the garlic plants with some kind of hoop/frame structure. In town, you might not need remay at all.

I harvest the scaups (scapes) which are the flower seed pods while they are still tender, curved over and use them as a vegetable. The snap right off. I harvest them in stages as they are ready. Blanch for 3 minutes, plunge into chilled water, drain and freeze the extras. They are great in stir fries and for stuffing a chicken. Filaree recommends cutting them as it redirects the energy to the bulb. I have let some go, dried and planted the seed. It takes a few years to get a bulb of garlic this way.

Approximately around September 1, I harvest my largest bulbs to dry for seed. The rest of my crop is harvested in mid to late September, depending on the weather. Harvest when the top 4 leaves are 50% green, or when the weather dictates. I dry the bulbs very well for 3-4 weeks before I plant them. I wash them and store them in netted bags with the tops on in a warm, dry area with a small fan on them. **They need to be cured well in order to replant, or they will rot. The larger the clove you plant, the larger the bulb will grow.** Do not even bother planting small cloves, just save them for eating. I label the rows well with metal tags. This helps me determine which varieties grow best for my conditions. I prefer large bulbs with large cloves that are easy to peel and keep well.

I dry the bulbs well with the stalks intact in net bags in a warm area for a month before I store them in a cool pantry(around 45-55 degrees). I know that some people store them at room temperatures too. Temperatures of 34-40 degrees Fahrenheit will cause sprouting. I cut the dry tops off at 1" before I store them. Many of these varieties keep a year for me in my pantry. Periodically, I pick through the small boxes I use to store the bulbs in to check for sprouting and use these cloves first. **My best keepers have been Siberian and Kahbar Marbled.**

I have had good luck planting with my own seed garlic for 4+ years now. If you order seed, do it with several friends, as the cost is cheaper for larger amounts. Order early--January if possible, and pick your delivery date, as they do run out of some varieties every year. You will also be given the best seed garlic, if you order early. I have them send it Sept. 1. If you get large bulbs, save them for seed garlic.

I try new varieties every few years. So far, I have planted hardneck and

softneck varieties. I have had good luck with Romanian Red Porcelain, Siberian Marbled, Khabar Marbled, Incheium Red, Brown Rose Marbled, and Chesnok Red. I am trying some new varieties this year. They are: Metechi Marbled Purpleskin, Okrent Artichoke, Georgian Crystal Porcelain, Silver White Silverskin, Armenian Porcelain, Susan D Porcelain, and Nootka Rose Silverskin.

If you want to spring plant, be sure to use organic garlic as it is not sprayed with a growth inhibitor. I have heard of people starting the cloves around May 1st in flats to plant June 1st in the garden with good results. You can also put them directly in the ground as early as you can work the soil. I do not know if they grow as large as fall planted or keep as well throughout the winter.

In conclusion, try it! You will be so pleased with the flavor and quality of your garlic!!

Sauerkraut: Keeps well all winter and summer in the refrigerator. I shred the sauerkraut in my Cuisinart(I like the 2mm blade). You can use a wooden kraut shredder too. I use 3 T of sea salt/ 5 lb of shredded cabbage. Mix well and pack $\frac{3}{4}$ full into clean gallon or half gallon glass jars with a potato masher. Seal the top with a **double** bag $\frac{1}{2}$ filled with water in a ziplock bag-gallon so no air is touching the sauerkraut. Place the jars in a warm (65-75) area for a week in a plastic tote just in case it bubbles over. Remove the bag of water, taste, add sauerkraut from an extra jars to fill all the other jars if it is cured enough for your taste, and compact well with a stainless steel spoon or potato masher. Put the lids on and keep in the refrigerator. Use a clean utensil to remove the sauerkraut as needed. We eat it raw most of the time, so as not to kill the probiotics and Vitamin C. It is not strong tasting at all. My favorite cabbages to grown are Danish Ballhead, Golden Acre and Copenhagen Market. I like cabbages that make a dense compact head, as they store better than others. I like to make it before the heads have had any frost.

Drying foods— I use an electric dehydrator with stackable trays. I dehydrate kale, nettles, parsley, tender broccoli leaves. I store them in my pantry in recycled jars and use them in soups, casseroles, stews, enchiladas, etc. These greens are very mild when dehydrated and easy to incorporate into recipes. They are a great source of calcium and minerals. This is also a good way to dehydrate mint, raspberry leaves or anything you might like for tea. My favorite kale is the Russian Red. It continually grows until winter. It is also tender.

Pickled beets: I substitute wine vinegar and honey or organic sugar to taste in a conventional recipe. I reduce the sugar by at least 1/3-1/2. After sealing in a water bath, they will keep for years in a pantry.

Red /White Cabbage: Stores until spring for me in large coolers in my root cellar,

especially the red long storing varieties. I separate the heads with a clean towel. My favorite red cabbage is Red Acre as it seems to keep for a really long time and grows well. I check often.

Carrots: I can keep them all winter in my refrigerator crisper in gallon ziplock bags with a few holes punched to allow moisture to escape. I clean them well and cut the tops off. I use a piece of paper towel in the bottom of the bag to absorb moisture. I store them in my root cellar in a cooler with the lid cracked. I separate them with a clean moist towel that I periodically remoisten by adding water on top. I prefer this to sand or sawdust.

Broccoli, Romanesque, Russian red kale(chop/pick often to keep it tender), spinach(chop): I freeze my excess broccoli, etc. carefully. I use uniform pieces, blanch for 3 minutes, plunge in ice water for 3 minutes, and pack in freezer quart ziplock bags. I know some people like to put them on a cookie sheet to freeze and then bag them so they can pour what they need. I like the Super Blend Giant Hybrids like Packman, Mariner and Pirate. I also like Waltham and Celebese.

Applesauce: I use cored, unpeeled, chopped, local apples to make applesauce. I sweeten with a little honey or organic sugar, and add cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg. I cook until they are soft and blend well in my Cuisinart. I pack into pint jars and water bath according to Putting Food By. This keeps well in a pantry.

Apple Juice: I use whole local apples and run them through my Champion Juicer. I freeze them in pints or quart recycled yogurt containers. This keeps well and really is flavorful!

Potatoes: I store these in my root cellar. They keep through the summer, but I have to watch for sprouting then.

Pesto: I make pesto with local basil, olive oil, my garlic, walnuts, almond or pecans in my Cuisinart. I freeze it in muffin tins, pop out and wrap in saran wrap and keep in the freezer for up to a year in a gallon ziplock bag. I also buy larger blocks of feta, cut, wrap and freeze as well. I make a salmon/ halibut topping as well as pasta and cabbage dishes with the pesto and feta. I also make **Nesto(nettle)** the same way.