

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 9-15-04) Growing Garlic, ©2005

Before I start today's column if you sent in an envelope for the herb tips don't despair – the tips will be returned in the mail to you this week. We were at the Fair and are just now wending our way to all the piles of requests on our desks. Thanks for your patience. It's still a great time of year to plant, pick, dry and preserve some of our garden herbs.

The questions for this week are “How do I grow garlic? Is there a better time? Spring? Fall?” These questions come through Ann Pyles proprietor of Smoketree Farm at the new Poulsbo Farmers Market from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Saturday through October 31 in Poulsbo. Ann shared her stall last week with “The Garlic Gourmet” and the customers were asking her for garlic advice. She forwarded the questions on to me for an answer so here goes.

September is the perfect month to plant garlic. You'll purchase bulbs and then divide up each clove for planting. Leave the papery covering on the cloves. You'll want to select a sunny, well-drained spot. Try to remove as many rocks as possible. (Did I hear laughing?) Avoid clay soil areas. If you have compost, mix some in to the entire planting area. Garlic likes light soils high in organic matter with a pH range of 6-7. Garlic also likes fertile soil so you'll want to till in about three pounds of 10-10-10 organic fertilizer for every 100 square feet of growing area.

Garlic likes to be kept moist so that's why planting in fall is so ideal followed by our usually wet weather from October through March at least. For Mary Robson's Regional Garden Column on garlic key in <http://gardening.wsu.edu/column/09-29-02.htm> and you'll find her advice on planting, growing and harvesting this delightful, tasty herb. If you do not have Internet access send a self-addressed stamped envelope with the word garlic on the bottom to Kitsap Extension Office, 614 Division Street MS-16, Port Orchard WA 98366-4676 and I'll mail you her directions for garlic growing success.

I found abundant resources for information on garlic but the following sites will get you started on your own research on this great herb. First is Filaree Farm, 182 Conconully Hwy, Okanogan WA 98840. The Farm is certified Organic by the WSDA. The phone number is (509) 422-6940. They've been farming organically since 1977. Their categories of garlic have these descriptive names: Racombole, Purple Strip, Porcelain, Artichoke, Silverstem, Asiatic Turban and Creole. Filaree is currently taking orders for fall planting.

Second on the list is www.TheGarlicStore.com from Colorado. Our son and his family live down the road from Fort Collins so the next time we're there I want to visit The Garlic Store at Yucca Ridge Farm, 46050 Weld County Road 13, Fort Collins, CO 46050. They can be contacted 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mountain Time at 1-800-854-7219.

See what you think about The Garlic Seed Foundation, Rose Valley Farm, Rose NY 14542-0149 at www.garlicseedfoundation.info and contacted by phone at (215) 587-9787

is a reputable source for a plethora of information on garlic from history, customs, lore, cultural and horticultural resources. The site says “Garlic has been grown by humans for at least 5000 years. North American consumption of garlic is 3 pounds per person per year and in the Far East the consumption is 50 pounds per person.” You can print a newsletter application from the website for “The Garlic Press” issued four times a year. The subscription rate is \$15 for the initial subscription and then only \$20 for two years at a time thereafter. Subscriptions are only accepted via snail mail.

Finally try http://www.naturalhub.com/grow_vegetable_type_garlic.htm from “The Natural Food Gardener.” You’ll find five pages of information about garlic and how to grow and harvest and store it. The site includes several useful links including sites for medicinal uses, recipes galore and numerous book excerpts and recommendations.

I have a true confession to share. I’m hooked on the curly tops that some garlic produces on a long flowering stem early in the summer. When you order your own garlic bulbs for planting look at the accompanying photos/pictures and if there’s a curly top buy and plant these varieties, make sure you harvest this “coil” when it’s produced on the stem. These curly stemmed flowers are absolutely scrumptious cut up and sautéed in a teensy bit of butter or olive oil. I kid you not. You’ll be pining for more when the blossoms cease each year. Even if you don’t grow your own garlic next spring and summer you’ll want to find some garlic coils to gorge on.

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