

Version:1.0 StartHTML:0000000181 EndHTML:0000003137 StartFragment:0000002362
EndFragment:0000003101
SourceURL:file:///localhost/Users/computer/Desktop/obits/barefootfarmer.doc

A great crop of garlic graces the garden shed. Tied in bunches and hung from nails in the rafters, it creates quite a sensation. Although the sight is one to behold, especially for garlic lovers, the aroma really stands out.

Each clove of garlic, sown in the fall, makes a bulb. They are planted six inches apart in rows 18 inches wide. A thick hay mulch is laid on over them immediately.

It was October when we planted the garlic patch, but I usually get them in during September. The beds received a healthy dose of compost and the soil was well pulverized. Only the biggest cloves from the best bulbs are used for seed, which insures the biggest and best harvest.

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The small green shoots emerge through the hay in about a month, then winter comes and plant life comes to a seeming standstill. But underground the roots are still active, until the dead of winter. When the weather warms, new green growth appears.

By April it's a foot tall and thriving. We pull weeds and shift the mulch around to smother small ones. Having plenty of hay between the beds makes this easier.

At the end of May flower stalks shoot up and curl. The distinctive pigtailed or racombole garlic are called scapes. They are a culinary delicacy and we snap them off to send to our customers. By relieving the plant of its flower and seed, more energy is put into the making of the bulb.

Towards the end of June the tops wither and it's time to harvest. I run through the beds with the subsoiler to loosen the soil so we can pull them up. They are laid in shallow piles to sun dry for a couple of days.

Garlic

Tuesday, July 13, 2010

I treat them like eggs, being gentle and careful. A little of the hay mulch is put on the truck bed so they don't get bruised when loading. Baling twine is used to tie bunches of 15 to 20 together.

Each bulb has about eight cloves, so it will take on eighth of the harvest to replant a similar sized field. We got through the crop and set aside the biggest and best ones for seed. Any bulbs that are damaged or not fully covered by their sheath are also set aside to be used first, as they won't store well.

Up in the rafters we look for wasps, which need to be knocked down. Then the bundles are passed up and hung from nails that are about a foot apart. Here they hang and finish curing.

Hanging garlic gives the shed the look of cornucopia, but the smell is what overcomes you. Dreams of Italian dishes will have to suffice until the tomatoes come in. Until then it's roasted garlic on baked potatoes, sauted garlic in omelets, and raw garlic for the hardy garlic lovers.