

Bell County Master Gardeners  
Tip of the Week  
By Candy Mullen  
“Garlic, the Versatile Herb, part 1”

With the prolific movies and books out about vampires and since it is October, I became curious about the tales of Garlic and what it is used for other than traditional cooking. Did you know that the irrational fear of garlic is alliumphobia?

*Allium sativum*, commonly known as garlic, is a species in the onion family Alliaceae. Its close relatives include the onion, shallot, leek, chive, and rakkyo. Garlic has been used throughout history for both culinary and medicinal purposes. The garlic plant's bulb is the most commonly used part of the plant.

With the exception of the single clove types, the bulb is divided into numerous fleshy sections called cloves. The cloves are used for consumption (raw or cooked), or for medicinal purposes, and have a characteristic pungent, spicy flavor that mellows and sweetens considerably with cooking. The leaves, and flowers (bulbils) on the head (spathe) are also edible, and are milder in flavor than the bulbs; they are most often consumed while immature and still tender.

Additionally, the immature flower stalks (scapes) of the hardneck and elephant types are sometimes marketed for uses similar to asparagus in fries. The root cluster attached to the basal plate of the bulb is the only part not typically considered palatable in any form. The sticky juice within the bulb cloves is used as an adhesive in mending glass and china.

In North America, *Allium vineale* (known as "wild garlic" or "crow garlic") and *Allium canadense*, known as "meadow garlic" or "wild garlic" and "wild onion", are common weeds in fields. One of the best-known "garlics", the so-called elephant garlic, is actually a wild leek (*Allium ampeloprasum*), and not true garlic.

Garlic is easy to grow and can be grown year-round in mild climates. While sexual propagation of garlic is indeed possible, nearly all of the garlic in cultivation is done so asexually, by planting individual cloves in the ground. In cold climates, cloves are planted in the ground in the fall, about six weeks before the soil freezes and harvested in late spring. Garlic plants are usually very hardy, and are not attacked by many pests or diseases. Garlic plants are said to repel rabbits and moles, so maybe it does work on vampires!

Next week part two about garlic and its properties. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)

