

Bell County Master Gardeners  
Tip of the Week  
By Candy Mullen  
“Garlic, The Versatile Herb, part 3”

This is the third article on garlic and deals mostly on growing it in Central Texas. I have noticed that in preparation for the harvest season and new vampire shows, garlic has gained in popularity! Perhaps that is why in early 18th -century France, gravediggers drank a concoction of crushed garlic in wine they believed would protect them from the plague that killed many people in Europe!

The name is of Anglo-Saxon origin, being derived from gar (a spear) and lac (a plant), in reference to the shape of its leaves.

The soil may be sandy, loam or clay, though Garlic flourishes best in a rich, moist, sandy soil. Dig over well, freeing the ground from all lumps and dig some lime into it. Tread firmly. Divide the bulbs into their component 'cloves' - each fair-sized bulb will divide into ten or twelve cloves - and with a dibber put in the cloves separately, about 2 inches deep and about 6 inches apart, leaving about 1 foot between the rows. It is well to give a dressing of soot.

Garlic beds should be in a sunny spot. They must be kept thoroughly free from weeds and the soil gathered up round the roots with a Dutch hoe from time to time. A little mulch will also help around each site.

When planted early in the spring, in February or March, the bulbs should be ready for lifting in August, when the leaves will be beginning to wither. If the summer was wet and cold, they may probably not be ready till nearly the middle of September. We usually don't have that trouble in Central Texas!

There are different types or subspecies of garlic, most notably hardneck garlic and softneck garlic. The latitude where the garlic is grown affects the choice of type as garlic can be day-length sensitive. Hardneck garlic is generally grown in cooler climates; softneck garlic is generally grown closer to the equator. So choose accordingly.

After harvesting, you can practice your skills of braiding and hang the “braid” in a dry place and use as needed. Garlic is easy to grow, harvest, and very versatile for the average and novice gardener. A braid of garlic that you grew hanging in your kitchen would be a source of pride. Try it!

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact

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