

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER VICTORIA COMPOST EDUCATION CENTRE

TWELVE TIPS FOR GROWING YOUR BEST GARLIC EVER

By Carolyn Herriot

Carolyn Herriot is the owner and operator of the Garden Path Nursery. Visit the website <http://www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath> to find out more about the Garden Path and to view the Seeds of Victoria catalogue

Seed garlic is currently on sale at the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre, 1216 North Park Street.
Wed-Sat 10am-4pm (cash or cheque accepted)



Image courtesy of Carolyn Herriot

Garlic has been revered for centuries as an effective plant for promoting good health and fighting infection, as well as for its many culinary uses. It also contains selenium, an essential trace element, often lacking in our diets.

Garlic falls into two distinctive sub-species:

The hardneck garlics (or Rocambole varieties) - *Allium ophioscorodon*. These produce a flower spike and have large (usually about 10) easy peeling cloves with a rich aromatic flavour. These will store for 6 months or so.

The softneck (or braiding) garlics - *Allium sativum*. These do not usually produce a flower spike and are generally more productive with cloves of a spicier flavour. They can be stored for up to a year under the right conditions (hopefully they will last until your next crop is ready for harvest).

Did you know that Elephant garlic, *Allium ampeloprasum*, is actually a perennial giant leek? It is milder than regular garlic, but has a bitter flavour when eaten raw. Unlike other garlic the cloves split up when dry, so it cannot be hung indefinitely, but it does have the advantage of a long storage life.

Many people are confused about the proper cultivation methods for garlic, which is actually a very easy crop to grow. Our climate is perfect for growing great garlic and there are lots of wonderful varieties to choose from. Here are 12 tips which should help you to grow your best garlic ever.

1. Early October is the best time to plant, about 6 weeks before the first hard frost. Fall planting gets garlic off to an early start in spring, as it needs at least 100 days to mature and a month of near freezing temperatures. Fall planting gives you good sized bulbs, Spring planted garlic rarely provides satisfactory yields.
2. Choose a sunny site with rich, well drained soil, not too rich or the tops will overdevelop. Garlic does not do well in light sandy soils or heavy clay, or soils lacking in organic matter.
3. Replanting the largest cloves of your favourite varieties will give you the largest sized bulbs.
4. Give garlic room to grow- it does not like to be spaced too close or to have competition from other plants, especially weeds, which will result in smaller bulbs. Space 6 inches apart in the row and the rows 1 foot apart.
5. Plant individual cloves with the pointy end just below the soil surface about 2 inches deep.
6. Mulching with straw, (avoid any with seed heads), once the ground has warmed up really cuts down on weeding and the need for watering. It also allows you to pull the garlic out of the ground by hand rather than forking it out, which may result in injury to the bulbs.
7. Stop watering about three weeks before harvesting to allow the bulb to start curing under the ground.
8. For hardneck garlics cut off the flower spikes when they appear. These garlic greens are delicious in stir fries. The energy used for the plant to go to seed will take away from bulb production.

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The Greater Victoria

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EDUCATION
CENTRE**

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COAST CAPITAL
SAVINGS FOUNDATION
FUNDS OUTREACH
PROJECT



Thank you to Coast Capital Savings Foundation, for supporting the Community Outreach Project at the Compost Education Centre. So far, their grant has assisted the Centre in attending 40 community outreach events (well on our way to our goal of 50, with the greater goal of reducing waste destined for the landfill)!

Through the efforts of trained volunteers and staff, residents have been contacted via mobile displays at home and garden shows, community markets, fairs, shopping centres, garden clubs and youth groups. Volunteers and staff have been there to answer questions, present information to residents on topics such as composting options, getting started, troubleshooting and to give further information on workshops offered at the Centre.

Thank you, Coast Capital Savings Foundation, for supporting waste reduction in the Capital Region.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Topic	Time	Cost
Oct 2	Composting Basics	2-4pm	Free
Oct 16	Training Fruit Trees	2-4pm	\$10/Free for members
Oct 23	Advanced Composting	10am-5pm	\$50/\$40 for members
Oct 30	Ecological Soil Management	2-4pm	\$10/Free for members
Nov 6	Composting Basics	2-4pm	Free
Nov 13	Composting Toilets and Greywater Systems	2-4pm	\$10/Free for members

Must pre register by calling 386-WORM or emailing info@compost.bc.ca

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to the following individuals for their generosity in donating to the Centre.

L. Beare and J. Olafson
R. Miller
N.Gillmor

We gratefully acknowledge the core funding support that we receive from the CRD and the City of Victoria. Additional support is provided by the Fernwood Community Association and through the generosity of our Compost Club Members and the residents of Greater Victoria.

HOMES AND HABITATS PROJECT IN FULL SWING!

Homes and Habitats is a partnership project between the *Wild Garden Party and Habitat for Humanity. The goal of the Homes and Habitats Project is to design and create a low-maintenance, water-wise, organic landscape that augments wildlife habitat, produces food, and recycles organic waste. The location for this landscape is in Sidney, at a six-unit subdivision being built for and with low-income families.

On June 12th, the ground building began - literally! The first big step was to level out the backyards of three of the homes to make more room for gardening space. This phase produced a few rock wall experts by the end!

Other work to date has included:

- Installing raised beds and planting them with winter veggies
- Creating (artistic!) paths with cement pavers
- Installing composters

Further work parties will include:

- Installing irrigation systems and rain barrels
- Planting Native Plants
- Mulching
- More raised beds

Thank you to Ali Garnett who coordinated the first eight month phase of this project through the University of Victoria's Co-op Programs. Ali will be back with us in January, to work on the framework manual: a guideline for future projects of this type.

Thank you to the countless volunteers who have spent time on site offering their muscle and expertise and also Habitat for Humanity for supplying the great lunches!

Thank you to the following groups for their support of the Homes and Habitats Project:

- JW McConnell Family Foundation/Victoria Foundation Environmental Funding Program
- Service Learning Internship Grant - University of Victoria
- Copley Bros Construction
- Trio Gravel Mart
- CRD Water
- Planet Organic
- Mitchell Excavating
- Capital Iron

If you are interested in volunteering for this project, it is a great (and fun) opportunity to learn about ecologically friendly landscaping, socialize over a nice lunch and assist a worthwhile project. Call Lynn at 386-9676 for more information

**The Wild Garden Party is collaboration between like-minded community groups, including the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre. Together we act as a catalyst for individuals, neighbourhoods and communities to create ecologically sustainable landscapes. We promote the conservation of wildlife habitat, organic gardening and landscaping, home and local food production, thoughtful use of our water resources, composting, and the inclusion of native plants in our landscapes.*



Mark does some prep work for the Homes and Habitats Project in Sidney

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9. Harvest in July, at least by early August, when about half of the leaves have turned yellow. If you wait until all the leaves have turned yellow the bulb will be over mature, and the cloves will have started to separate from the bulb, which means it will not store well.
10. Dry the bulbs after digging them by leaving them in the sun for two or three days, unless it is really hot which may cause them to burn, or threatening to rain, which will cause them to rot.
11. Remove surface soil from the bulbs by hand gently to preserve the protective skin layers. Hang tied in bunches of 6-7 bulbs in a warm, dark, airy place to dry well.
12. Store in a cool place to provide the longest storage life.

In these times of increasing stress to our systems, adding garlic to your diet will boost your immune system and help you to combat infections and illness. Once you get started growing your own fresh flavoursome garlic, (and can resist eating your whole crop), save the largest bulbs of your favourite varieties for replanting, and you will never have to eat store-bought garlic again.

Micro Spray and Drip Irrigation

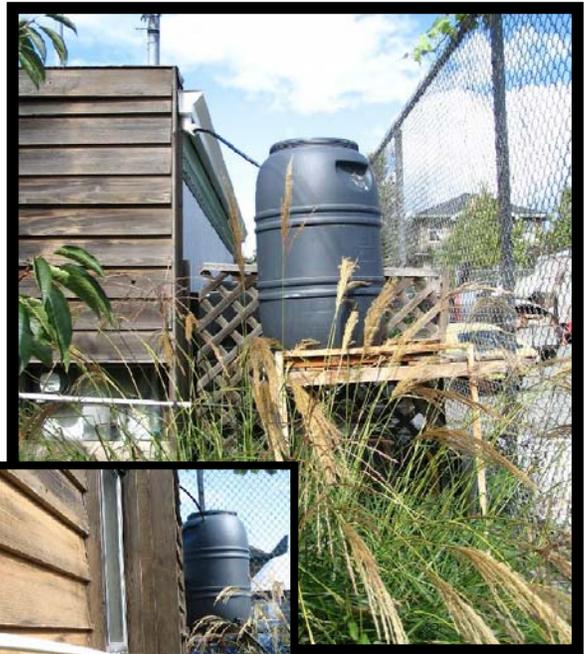
To demonstrate economical water use, we are installing a combination drip and micro spray irrigation on a timer system (CRD approved for summer droughts!). This project will be ongoing over the next few months and be finished in time for the New Year. One big step in this project is to dig 150 feet of trenches to bury the irrigation lines. If you have a healthy back and enjoy digging, we could use you! Call Chris at 386-9676 for more information.

More Rain Barrels Installed

Not only does the Centre's office house provide greenhouse space for plants, it is now being utilized to collect rain water for use in our garden beds! Next time you visit the centre, have a look for two rain barrels set up in the welcome bed (to the right as you come through the gate). That brings the total rain barrels on site up to six (there are four attached to the straw bale building roof). These rain barrels, combined with our soon to be finished irrigation project, makes for one water wise site and reduces our reliance on the CRD water reservoir!

Composting Toilet

Now available for your viewing pleasure at the Centre, a Sun Mar composting toilet! Although not yet in use, it is assembled in a newly constructed out building beside the straw bale building. Visitors are encouraged to stop by to see its components and learn a little about the basics of composting human "by-products". Thank you to Sun Mar for their support of this project.



New Look for Garden Beds

Using brick left over from other projects on site, we have just finished lining the outside perimeters of the garden beds that are along the path to the office and straw bale building. Not only are the beds more attractive, but it also helps keep mulch in place and clearly marks the difference between the paths and the beds. The next time you have leftover brick from a home project (more common than it sounds!) instead of looking for ways to get it to the landfill, try using it around the home for your landscaping projects.

Winter Vegetable Beds

Fall and winter are great times to visit the Compost Education Centre to find out why the rest of Canada is jealous of Victoria- we can garden year round! The garden beds at the centre are now prepped for winter, with many varieties of vegetables suitable for our colder season. In many ways, gardening in the fall and winter is easier: very few pests to deal with and less time spent watering!

THE LATEST DIRT is published quarterly. The deadline for submissions for the Fall issue is November 17, 2004. Submissions to the newsletter can be sent to the Compost Education Centre. Unless otherwise noted, articles appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted only in other not-for-profit publications, with the credit given to the author (when named) and THE LATEST DIRT.