



NOTES From GARLIC WORKSHOP II

18th April 2010

The introductory discussion focussed on the distinctive types of garlic. Although there are a huge number of garlic varieties, most are one of nine or ten distinct types. (See pdf Phenotypic types of Garlic and Table 1 :Garlic Varieties in the pdf *Growing Garlic in NSW*) Understanding the characteristics of the type of garlic is important for selecting the type that most suits your own particular requirements.

For the Gloucester area usually plant mid-April for mid-November harvesting. In areas where there is no frost, it may be beneficial to chill the garlic cloves in the fridge crisper for 5-7 days before planting. Soaking garlic in food-grade hydrogen peroxide for half an hour before planting also energises the bulbs.

Garlic needs excellent drainage - bulbs will rot if sitting in soil with too high a moisture content. As well as flat row beds which have been built up to facilitate drainage, you can mound up the soil into single North-South rows, plant on top of mounds and mulch along the troughs and sides of mounds.

Plant cloves 12-20 cm apart when night temps fall below 10deg C. Distances between rows and plants vary according to the site - amount of sunshine, nutrients, water available all make a difference. If planting in rich friable well prepared soil with plenty of nutrients then you can grow plants closer. If the soil is not so rich then allow more space between plants

Make planting easier by using measuring sticks; a framework to make multiple holes, or, just wriggle the cloves into the soil, about 5 cm deep. Also alternate rows may have staggered planting to make full use of available sun. Ideally the best cloves should be saved for planting. The bigger the clove planted the bigger the final bulb. The more leaf material the plant makes, the bigger the final bulb.

Monitor the moisture content of the soil when planting to decide whether watering-in is needed. If rain is coming, let nature do the watering. Watering may be needed a few times during the growing season depending on the amount of rainfall.

Mulch loosely (not in compacted pads) 30-40 cm deep over the whole bed. This must be done before the garlic shoots. It may take a up to a month for the shoots to get through the mulch. Mulch keeps moisture in the soil, stops the ground from getting too cold and suppresses weeds.

It is important to control weeds - you can dig a trench around the bed to keep out kikuyu and use a whipper snipper under the mulch when the grass grows into the bed.

If there is late wet weather close to harvest the bulbs tend to split open.

Garlic does not have any insect problems and most animals won't eat it, although chooks will dig it up when scratching the mulch. Fungus or downy mildew may be a problem if bed is too wet. You can spray mildew with fresh milk or bi-carbonate of soda mix.

Use a well-prepared garlic beds for one season. Either rest it the following season or grow something like beans or mustard seed to put the nitrogen back into soil.

You can use last-years leftovers which shoot in the fallow bed as garlic greens or cut off the green shoots and replant them to use as seed for next years crop. Once garlic has sprouted though, replanting will weaken the garlic and you will not get a good crop.

Measuring tool for planting garlic - 2 tomato stakes bolted together, one marked with 3 or 4 cuts at 8" to go across the bed and one lengthwise stake with a mark 8" from the bolt. Each time you plant a row of corms across the bed, place a peg at the lengthwise 8" mark. When row finished, move the measuring tool up to the peg and plant next row of corms across the bed and mark the lengthwise 8" with the peg. Continue along the bed until planting finished. See Photo Gallery.

Thanks to Terry Hardwick for once again acting as the scribe.