

Published October 8th, 2014

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Peppercorns, sage, shallots, and garlic make a zesty, spicy herbal broth. Photo Cynthia Brian

monastery!

Legend has it that garlic repels vampires and wards off the evil eye. Popularized by Bram Stoker's "Dracula," garlic not only is effective against the blood-sucking princes of the night, but also fends off the undead, including witches, warlocks, and werewolves. The Salerno Regimen of Health of the 12th century stated, "Garlic hath powers to save from death, though it makes unsavory breath." Ah yes, we all know the aroma of garlic breath, most certainly not a temptress of amour!

As All Hallowed Eve approaches, we may not be inclined to rub down our chimneys, keyholes, and clothing, or wear allium necklaces as protective gear, but since this month is the perfect time to plant the vigorous vampire repellent, let's dig in.

How to Plant and Harvest Vampire Repellent Garlic

A relative of onions, chives, and shallots, garlic is easy to grow. Garlic is best planted when the soil is still warm, nights are cool, and frost is six to eight weeks away. Garlic needs a head start on sprouting before winter arrives. Buy seed garlic at your garden center or order from nursery catalogues or online. Recommended suppliers include Rene's Garden, Burpee, Territorial Seed, Dominion Seed House, Harris Seeds, or Botanical Interests. Gardener's Supply offers unique garlic grow bags. When in a pinch, I have even planted cloves from the grocery store and they thrive.

1. Choose a sunny spot.
2. Prepare the soil. Garlic prefers well-drained soil mixed with rich, organic matter.
3. Separate the garlic bulb into cloves.
4. Plant each clove about 1 1/2 inches deep, 6 inches apart with the root pointing down (that's the round part) and the tip reaching for the sun.
5. Cover with soil. Add a thick layer of straw for warmth and protection.
6. Maintain a level of 3 inches of mulch covering throughout the winter.
7. Harvesting begins in late spring when the leaves dry and flop over.
8. Gently tug until the bulb comes out. Garlic is ready if it is round and plump.
9. After you've shaken the dirt off your bulbs, place the plants on a flat or lay on top of the soil in the garden to dry for at least a week.
10. Once the bulbs are dry and the skins are papery, you can weave garlands to hang to dry. Or cut

"Garlick maketh a man wynke, drynke, and stynke." - Thomas Nash, 16th Century Poet
 Allium sativum, also known as garlic has been revered in medicine, myth, and magic throughout time. Sanskrit records registered the medicinal properties of garlic 5,000 years ago. The Greeks and Babylonians used it for healing purposes, and the Chinese have prescribed garlic treatments for over 3,000 years. The Egyptians reverently buried their Pharaohs with consecrated cloves ensuring sweet dreams, and fed the slaves garlic to increase strength and endurance while building the pyramids. Roman soldiers believed that garlic bestowed bravery and courage. Hippocrates recommended garlic as a medical remedy for infections, digestive disorders, wounds, and even leprosy. In 1858, Louis Pasteur noted garlic's antibacterial qualities. Considered an aphrodisiac, it may be one reason that Tibetan monks weren't allowed to consume garlic before entering a

off the tops, trim the roots, and single layer the bulbs on a sheet to dry for several more weeks. To reduce the potential for rot, make sure there is plenty of air circulation.

11. Store in a cool, dry place. "Garlic Keepers" which are bags or pots (ceramic, terra cotta, or metal) with holes for circulation work well. When stored properly, garlic bulbs will remain fresh and pungent for seven months.

With my Italian heritage, I can't imagine a meal without garlic. In our household, it turns ordinary dishes into culinary masterpieces. We also use it for a plethora of medicinal purposes from putting cloves in our pets' food to deter ticks and worms, to using it with warm olive oil to soothe an earache or calm a cough. Mosquitoes and insects avoid me when I devour cloves of raw garlic. (Of course, humans and unseen devils keep their distance as well!)

Herbalists recommend garlic to combat illnesses including high cholesterol, colds, flu, coughs, bronchitis, fever, ringworm, and digestive issues. There is mounting scientific evidence that garlic could prevent heart disease, lower cholesterol, and protect against some cancers. I agree with Louis Diat's words about this curative bulb, "Without garlic I simply would not care to live."

Plant enough cloves and you'll have plenty of the stinking rose for eating, healing, and keeping ghouls, ghosts, and gremlins at bay!

Happy Halloween, Happy Gardening, Happy Growing, Happy Garlic Breath! Booooo!

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

1. Boost your levels of vitamin C before flu and cold season begins by brewing a homegrown rose hip, sage, and peppercorn tea. Pick ripe red rose hips from your rose bushes and red peppercorns from your pepper tree. Smash or grind and add to tea pot with shaved ginger, lemon rind, lemon juice, sage leaves, and honey. Peppery and delicious, hot or iced. Substitute garlic for the honey for a zesty herbal broth yummy with steamed vegetables.
2. Pick your remaining peppers, tomatoes, tomatillos, and eggplant before the rains start.
3. Enjoy the fiery red foliage of pistache trees in a container or cut a few branches for indoor displays.
4. Fertilize and aerate lawns this month.
5. Refrigerate tulips, hyacinths, and crocus for four weeks before planting.
6. Thanks to all the fans of the Lamorinda Weekly who stopped by the Be the Star You Are!(r) booth at the Pear and Wine Festival to pick up seeds, potpourri, and participate in our community writing story. If you are interested in knowing how the story evolved, here's the link: http://www.btsya.com/uploads/2014_Once_upon_a_time_REVISED.pdf

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I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.

1. Choose a sunny spot.



Hang garlic garlands to dry as well as ward off the warlocks, witches, vampires, and evil eye.



Garlic chives in bloom.



A basket of pumpkins, gourds, and squash decorates a front porch.



Pick the last of your bell peppers before the rains begin.

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