

THE EDIBLE GARDEN



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GARDEN ACTIVITIES

Plant garlic cloves.

Save disease free fallen leaves as they make excellent mulch for winter protection or compost.

Run a lawn mower over fallen leaves to shred them making a fine leaf litter.

Keep watering newly planted fruit trees and bushes.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The tops of Egyptian onions can be used in stir fries
- Garlic is a good companion plant for many plants including roses, tomatoes, fruit trees, cane fruits...
- Do not plant *garlic* near peas, beans or asparagus.
- Horseradish suitably contained is a good companion for potatoes
- Records of *rhubarb* use go back nearly 5,000 years, initially as a drug, later as a food.

GROWING GARLIC

*Gerda Franssen
Master Gardener of Lanark*



Growing garlic is as easy as 1, 2, 3. The garlic clove is planted in October—sets roots—rests during the winter and in the spring you will see green shoots growing. In mid July, it is harvested—dried and ready to eat. Save some bulbs for planting in October and the cycle begins again. Purchase your garlic from local growers at the Farmers' Market. Much of the garlic that appears in Supermarkets is from China.

Pick a location with full sun and good drainage—add compost—your own or sheep/cow manure and work into the soil. A little wood ash can also be added. The soil pH should be 6.0-7.5.

Now that your bed is prepared for planting, crack [separate] the bulbs into cloves—keep only the best cloves and use the culled cloves for cooking. Dig a trench 8cm [3 inches] deep and plant cloves pointed side up 15cm [6 inches] apart. Fill in the trench with soil. Rows should be spaced 30cm [12 inches] apart.

When the ground is frozen [mid Nov] mulch with 15cm [6 inches] of straw. If you mulch at this time the rodents will have already found their winter home elsewhere, not in you garlic patch. The straw mulch will protect the roots from the freeze thaw cycle that happens in the late winter early spring. It will also preserve the moisture in the soil and keep the weeds under control.

In early spring you will see spears of green growing through the mulch. At this time you may move the straw back a little from the plant. Garlic does not like competition from weeds so hand pick weeds as they emerge. Water up to 2cm [1 inch] if rainfall is not adequate. If you started with rich soil you won't need to fertilize, otherwise use a manure tea.



In late June early July you will see scapes emerging from your hard neck garlic. These are to be picked when they start to curl and can be used in cooking. By picking the scapes the energy growth will go to producing a larger bulb. (see July's Edible Garden)

By mid July the harvesting begins, soft necks [used for braiding] usually mature a week ahead of the hard necks. No watering is required two weeks before the harvest. The green leaves will start to die from the bottom up—when two or three have died, it is time to dig the bulbs. If you are not sure lift a bulb and check it—the bulb covering should be intact. Choose a dry day for harvesting—

with a garden fork carefully dig the garlic bulbs greens and all. Rub loose soil from the roots, tie in bunches of 10 and hang in a shaded well ventilated shed /carport. You may also dry them on screens. Garlic should not be left in the sun while harvesting or curing as it will cook. After 2 to 3 weeks of curing it is ready for storage.

Cut the dried stock from the bulb and trim the roots. Rub the bulb to remove any soil. Discard damaged bulbs [use them in your cooking]. Store garlic in mesh or paper bags in a dry place 18-20C [60-70 degrees] not your refrigerator which is too cool. Now you have garlic to eat and some to plant in October.

PERENNIAL VEGETABLES

*Dale Odorizzi
Master Gardener of Lanark*

Most of our vegetables are annuals. However there are many perennial edibles. Because your crop will stay in the ground 20-40 years, choose its location carefully.

Asparagus tastes like spring. It is a vegetable that takes a bit of patience for the home gardener but it is well worth the effort. You can start asparagus with seeds but that adds at least another year to your first harvest. Most people choose to buy asparagus crowns. Look for fresh, firm-fleshed roots. If they are shrivelled, they may be old and not produce well. Plant the crowns early in the spring, while they are dormant. A few crowns can be planted by digging individual holes. The optimum depth to plant the crown is 15-20 cm. Dig the planting hole deep enough that you can add a good layer of compost or other organic matter.

If you are planting a lot, dig a trench and initially cover the crown with 5-8 cm of soil. Keep adding to the trench as the spears emerge so that at the end of the season your trench is full. Plant crowns 40-45 cm apart to allow for good air circulation. Keep your asparagus bed well weeded. Older varieties of asparagus required 3 years of growing before you could harvest but newer, more robust varieties allow a small harvest in the first year (10% of your crop). In subsequent years, harvest all spears thicker than 1.5 cm and leave the others to grow. Harvest the spears when 15-20 cm tall. Snap off the asparagus at soil level. Fern formation is essential for next year's growth so be sure to stop harvesting so some of the spears can go to leaf. In late fall cut the plants to the ground so that your new crop will be accessible in the spring.

Rhubarb is another spring favourite. It is easy to grow from crowns or segments of the parent plant. It is available in the spring from farmers markets or nurseries. Choose crowns that are firm and healthy and have one or more round, reddish buds. Spring planting is best. Plants can grow up to 90 cm tall and 120-150 cm across so give them lots of room, in full sun and fertile, well-drained soil. Dig a hole 60 cm deep and wide and add 15 cm of compost or well-rotted manure to the bottom. Fill the rest of the hole with a mix of soil and compost, leaving a depression for the crown. Set the crown in the prepared bed and cover the buds with 2.5 cm of soil. Water well and mulch with a mixture of compost, straw or leaves to a depth of 15 cm but leave a space in the centre for the crown. Keep soil moist but not soggy. Remove flower stalks as they appear. In fall fluff up the mulch.

Do not harvest stalks the first year. Plants need to devote their energy to producing roots. During the second year, only harvest a few stalks during the first two weeks of production. In subsequent years, harvest can continue for 8-10 weeks.

Rhubarb leaves can be composted but never eaten. Keep your plants well weeded. To harvest, choose stalks at least 30 cm long. Grasp the stalk in your hand, slide your thumb down the inner groove as far as it will go, and then twist the stalk while pulling up. Take less than half the stalks per plant at each picking.



Horseradish is often linked with Roast Beef in our minds. It is definitely a perennial vegetable that if left uncontrolled can become extremely invasive. You should never use a Rototiller in a horseradish patch or compost it. It does need loose, deep soil, about 60 cm deep, if you want single, long root rather than a scattering of small ones. Check out the huge roots at the supermarket. A bed of compost, sand and peat are ideal. When you harvest it, you leave a lot of little pieces of root. Each piece will form a new plant.

As a home gardener you can avoid its invasiveness by growing your plant in a 5 gallon plastic pail. Drill some holes in the bottom and fill it with compost, sand and peat.

Place a root cutting in the soil and keep it moist until it sprouts. The pail can be buried in the garden. The best place to buy horseradish is at a Farmers Market and the next best is from a local market. Cut off the top third or half of the root and use in the kitchen. Save the bottom part to plant. Freshly grated horseradish emits fumes that can make your nose run and irritate your eyes so prepare it in a well-ventilated area or even outside.

Sun chokes, also known as Jerusalem Artichokes, must be approached carefully as they too can become invasive. Sun chokes are a tuber with a delicate, artichoke like flavour. If eaten raw, they can cause serious gas and bloating. They are rich in inulin, a carbohydrate associated with good intestinal health due to prebiotic (bacteria promoting) properties. They contain Vitamin C, phosphorous and potassium and are a very good source of iron. Cook sun chokes as you would potatoes—roast, sauté, bake, boil or steam. These vegetables are better for people with diabetes than potatoes because of the inulin.

The sun choke is a variety of perennial sunflower, native to North America. Plant tubers in the garden 2-3 weeks before average last frost date. They grow 150-300 cm tall, have rough textured leaves and small yellow flowers. Full sun is best but they will grow almost anywhere. They grow, divide and spread easily. To control, install wood, plastic or metal barriers at least 60 cm deep in the soil and avoid deep cultivation. They can also be grown in containers. Choose a container at least 50 cm across for one plant. Harvest 120-150 days after planting. Cut off flower stalks as they appear to encourage tuber production. They will keep in the refrigerator for 7-10 days or in a cold moist place for 2-5 months. They can be left in the ground until needed if protected with a layer of mulch.



Egyptian Onions are also known as Walking Onions for their tendency to lean over and root the bulbs that grow at the top of the flower stalks. They are robustly flavoured and produce green onions during the entire growing season with some being ready to harvest 3 weeks after winter snow cover melts. Propagate by planting the bulbs at the top of the flower stalk or by digging and dividing the mother clump. If you only have a few bulbs to start, you might want to wait a while before harvesting but after that, harvest the green onions when they are the size of a pencil or harvest the bulbs and use fresh or as pickling onions.

Herbs, such as sage, oregano, chive and garlic chives, thyme, mint, sorrel and lavender are another source of perennial edibles. Oregano and the various mints love to spread and should be contained. All are attractive and make beautiful additions to the Perennial garden.

DID YOU KNOW? Continued

Good King Henry or *Blitum bonus-henricus* syn. *Chenopodium bonus-henricus*, was once a popular spring vegetable in Europe. It was brought to North America in pioneer times but fell out of use and into the wild. Use as a spring substitute for spinach - good with a bit of salt and

Recipe

*Susan Bicket,
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

RHUBARB CRUMBLE

140 g Flour

butter! Good King Henry is highly nutritious.
Sea Kale or *Crambe maritima* is sometimes harvested for its roots and shoots both of which can substitute for spinach. Its family members include cabbage, cress and turnips. Otherwise it serves as an interesting ornamental.

Jerusalem Artichoke or *Helianthus tuberosus* is not an artichoke but a member of the sunflower family. The “Jerusalem” part of the name may derive from the Spanish word “girasol” which means “sunflower”. Its tubers are highly nutritious and devoid of starch making it a good choice for people managing diabetes. This native American plant is several times more productive than potatoes but has some drawbacks as it does not store as well and is harder to clean than potatoes.

Egyptian Onions or *Allium proliferum* fed the pyramid labourers and Roman soldiers at war because of its health enhancing powers. Egyptian onions share regular onions ability to enhance flavour but are more interesting in the garden. The tops form bulbils – sometimes more than one set while an underground bulb splits into many sections which then produce scallions. When the main stem weakens the bulbils touch ground and new onions are formed. All parts are edible.

½ teaspoon ginger
70-85g cold butter
Dark brown sugar to taste - optional

500g rhubarb cut into chunks
100g brown sugar mixed with 1 teaspoon ginger

1. Preheat oven to 180°C
2. Sieve flour and ginger together into a bowl
3. Cut the butter into the bowl and rub in with cold finger tips until the mixture resembles bread crumbs.
4. Place rhubarb and sugar mixture in a deep oven proof dish.
5. Cover with the crumble mix.
6. Bake in the oven for about 40 minutes, until the top is browned
7. Serve, with cream or custard

OK to leave periods off in recipes. However we need to be consistent.

Options:

Use a whole wheat flour or a spelt flour
Add oatmeal or almonds to the crumble mix
Replace 1/3 of the flour with ground almonds
Leave the ginger out
Sprinkle the top with extra sugar and/or butter

Watch for **Trowel Talk** the Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton electronic monthly gardening newsletter available on the 15th at <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca/>

Visit the Almonte online community newspaper ‘**The Millstone**’ - <http://millstonenews.com/> -for a column by David Hinks of the Ottawa Carleton Master Gardeners; under the Gardening tab

Photographs: Gerda Franssen (garlic), Nancy McDonald (Egyptian onion), Jon Last (Horseradish with kitten)

The Edible Garden logo was created by Jon Last (jonlast13@rogers.com)

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