



October 2023 Newsletter

Hello fellow garlic lovers!

It's been a great year for us here at the Living Soil Garlic Farm, and it's nearly time to start another year in the garlic life cycle! This spring was extremely dry for northwestern Pennsylvania, but the crop ended up decent anyway. We credit the mycorrhizae in our living soil for finding water for the garlic plants when there was little to go around. The harvest and curing went well, and then we made our first attempts to try to sell some of the fruits of our labor. We are very happy to say folks have responded positively to our garlic and we are nearly sold out for the year!

We have attended the Cuba Garlic Festival near the Finger Lakes for years. This was our first time there as a vendor. The crowd was awesome, and we had a great time talking with the folks as they paused at our tent. We want to give a huge "Thank You" to all of the many people who took some of our garlic home with them! We really appreciate your business, and hope to win you as regular customers with high quality garlic grown by the Regenerative approach.



Our booth at the Cuba Garlic Festival

As we begin the month of October, we are excitedly watching the cover crop of forage radishes growing in the future garlic beds. They resemble the large daikon radishes you may find in the grocery store. These are not edible as they are too fibrous and tough. However, they are pure magic in the soil! They “drill” deep holes in our clay soil, up to several feet deep. This allows water and air to penetrate deep into the soil when the roots decay over winter. As with all cover crops, the radishes mine nutrients from deep in the subsoil, making them available for the garlic. The “root exudates” of sugar and other compounds feed the soil microbiology and create habitat for them deep in the soil. The radishes decay readily, releasing those nutrients by spring when the garlic starts emerging from the mulch. They also give off a compound as they decay that reduces the nematode population in the soil. Some nematodes are enemies of root crops like garlic, so this is a big benefit.

Right now the radishes roots are about the size of small to large carrots. Four weeks from now when we plant garlic the largest roots will be the size of my arm from the elbow down. The top of the root can be up to about three inches in diameter and can reach to about a foot deep. The small, bottom end of the tap root, about the size of a pencil, will continue on down for several feet, opening up passageways for air and water. We till shallow, only about an inch deep, so the majority of the tap root is undisturbed. The root channels will remain open after the radishes decay. The drainage, texture, and fertility of the soil will improve year after year. The tiller easily shreds the radish tops and prepares the “seed bed” for planting the garlic cloves. We have found the best date for planting the radishes at our latitude is about August 10th to 12th. Earlier than that it is too hot and dry for them to reliably germinate and grow. Later than that, the days are getting shorter and the reduced day length interferes with optimum growth in spite of the desirable cooler temperatures. The seed is inexpensive and widely available.



Applying fish fertilizer to the radishes as a foliar spray.

If you are thinking about planting a garlic bed this fall we encourage you to begin preparations now. First and foremost, make sure your soil is well drained. Garlic will NOT tolerate wet soil, and will not do well in compacted soil. If you have any concerns about your soil, build a raised bed and fill it with compost on top of clean cardboard for a weed barrier. Remove any staples, tape, or stickers from the cardboard, and avoid any with a glossy or waxy coating. Do not turn the soil underneath the compost, although loosening it with a spade or potato fork will be helpful if it is very compacted. Apply lime and organic fertilizer as indicated by a soil test.



*New garden beds for fall brassicas built on top of highly compacted soil.
Note the clean cardboard under the compost. I later put cardboard and
wood chips in the paths between the beds.*

We used to plant in mid-October as everyone recommends, but the season is so much longer now that we wait till the first week of November. This is usually late enough that most of the garlic does not emerge until spring. We mulch heavily, applying about 6 to 8 inches of **shredded** leaves that I mow and harvest from our neighbors' yards. You can use other organic materials for mulch, and we very strongly recommend you mulch generously with something. There are many benefits to this, not the least of which is weed suppression. We never have to pull weeds because they are just starting to poke through the leaf mulch by harvest time in early July. They are not an issue at that time, so we can ignore them. After the harvest, we plant buckwheat in the beds as the next cover crop. By the way, a thick mulch of organic materials like leaves or grass clippings will offer many benefits to all of your vegetable and flower beds!



The garlic has emerged from the thick mulch of shredded leaves and is looking great.



The garlic grows up through the shredded leaf mulch with no problems. Note the size of the root system on April 8th. The soil in our beds never freezes because of heat generated by abundant microbial activity and mulch insulation, so the roots grow slowly all winter long.

This month's recipe!

GARLIC RICE



- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, very thinly sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 4 tbsps. butter, divided
- 1 ½ cups white or jasmine rice, uncooked
- 2 ½ cups chicken broth
- salt & pepper

Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over low heat. Add the **garlic slices** and sauté, stirring constantly, just until golden. Be careful not to let the garlic turn dark brown. Turn off the heat and immediately remove the garlic from the pan. Pour all remaining oil out (this can be saved for use in something else).

Return pan to the stove. Add **2 tbsps. butter** and melt over medium heat. Add the **chopped garlic**. Fry for 1 minute.

Add the rice and stir to coat in the butter. Fry for 1 minute. Add broth and bring to a boil. Stir, cover the pan, and turn down to low. Cook for 15 minutes. **DO NOT** lift the lid while cooking.

Remove pan from the heat and let sit for 5 minutes. Gently stir in the remaining **2 tbsps. butter**, salt, and pepper. Scoop into a serving dish, sprinkle with the crispy garlic slices, and serve.

By the time the next newsletter comes out in early November, we hope to have the garlic planted. Till then, **enjoy more garlic!**

Dave & Julie

www.livingsoilgarlicfarm.com