

# KOOTENAY & BOUNDARY FARM ADVISORS (KBFA)

## Grow Garlic for Profit Workshop

*Event summary & key messages*

*May 12, 2018, Kootenay Bay*

### Event overview

Jim Capellini with Rasa Creek Farm collaborated with KBFA for a one-day workshop in May 2018. Topics included best practices for intensive garlic production and product marketing.

### Resources

- PowerPoint presentation from the event – available on KBFA website.
- Rasa Creek Farm's website provides extensive resources on all aspects of garlic production: [www.rasacreekfarm.com](http://www.rasacreekfarm.com). Jim is also available as a resource person for garlic issues.
- The Garlic News: quarterly newsletter published in Ontario and widely distributed throughout Canada and beyond in print or digital format (subscription information on Rasa Creek Website).



JIM CAPELLINI TALKS GARLIC, KOOTENAY BAY, 2018

### Key Messages

1. **Seven-inch plant spacing** is optimal to maximize volume.
2. **Five to seven bulbs per pound** is optimal to maximize profit.
3. **Plan how much seed you will need to hold back every year** to grow your garlic operation to your desired size and consider this when choosing your garlic variety. For example, a four-clove variety will require holding back a fair amount of stock every year as seed.
4. **Build your customer contact list every time you make a sale**, if you are marketing direct to consumer (e.g. farmers markets). This way you can contact your customers when you have news or extra product.
5. **Consider winter sales.** If you can't get the price you want for your product in the fall, store it and sell it in January.

Did you implement a recommendation from a KBFA event or resource?

Let us know. Email [coordinator@kbfa](mailto:coordinator@kbfa). Call or text 778-771-5851

## Business Tips

### Planning for future profit

- Free Excel spreadsheets are available on the Rasa Creek website that allow producers to insert data and goals for up to five years to understand potential profit.
- When choosing garlic varieties, consider that the number of cloves per plant will impact the amount of stock you will need to hold back every year to grow your garlic operation.

### Marketing

- To attract and retain customers, grow a minimum of three varieties.
- Consider the type of distribution that suits your operation, whether wholesale or direct to consumers.
- When selling direct to consumer (e.g. farmers markets), build your customer contact list every time you make a sale so you can contact your customers when you have news or extra product.
- Winter sales often command higher prices. If you can't get the price you want for your product in the fall, store it and sell it in January.



JIM CAPELLINI DEMONSTRATES QUALITY GARLIC PRODUCTION AT THE ASHRAM GARLIC FARM, KOOTENAY BAY.

## Production Tips

### Plant spacing and size

- Seven-inch spacing in all directions is ideal to maximize use of space and allow for full growth. Jim uses a diamond pattern in beds that are three feet wide, with six rows per bed.
- Aim for five to seven bulbs per pound. More bulbs per pound equals more work and less profit.
- Dimpling: make a board or roller with plugs that are spaced seven-inches apart. Press into the soil to create 'dimples.' This will ensure even plant spacing.

### Disease

- White rot or not? Garlic clove samples need to be sent to a lab to confirm white rot disease. The lab's address is on the Rasa Creek website. Cost per sample is \$35.
- Resources on how to treat wireworm are on Rasa Creek's website.

### Cover crops

- Jim highly recommends the publication *"Managing Cover Crops Profitably"* by Sustainable Agriculture & Research Education (available online and for purchase).

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## Soil and plant amendments

- Jim adds fertilizer and amendments every season before he plants the garlic. He uses a mixture of composted manure, alfalfa pellets, and an all-purpose organic fertilizer.
- Jim uses a foliar fertilizer a few times through the growing season. Biomet's "BioFish 3-1-2" is suitable for organic production.

## Irrigation

- Jim uses drip inexpensive "Toro" brand irrigation that he purchases from Growers Supply in the Okanagan. The most important part of the system is the pressure reducer valve to ensure even water pressure.
- Tips when laying drip line:
  - Lay drip tape with holes facing up so that the holes don't get plugged with mineral deposits from standing water.
  - Attach bungee cords at the ends of the drip tape to maintain tension in the drip line.

## Mulch

- Jim uses brown Kraft paper as mulch. He does not use thick organic mulches because of rodent issues. He purchases large roles of brown paper from Uline.ca.

## Harvest

- Remove garlic scapes when they start to harden at the base and can be snapped off easily.
- Don't wait too long to harvest your garlic as it will decrease the quality of the protective skin around each bulb.
- Sort your garlic bulb sizes before hanging: sort into sizes (e.g. small, medium, large) before you hang your garlic. This will give you a good idea on the size of your harvest while you wait for it to cure.

## Curing garlic

- Jim hangs his garlic in bunches of 100. Check out Jim's video on the most efficient way to hang garlic in bunches of 100 ([www.rasacreekfarm.com/how-to-grow-garlic](http://www.rasacreekfarm.com/how-to-grow-garlic)).
- Cure garlic in the shade with lots of air circulation until the tops are brown and crinkly and bulbs are dry.

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