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SET THE TABLE FROM YOUR GARDEN

E-Newsletter Archives

April, 2014

Drought - Plant Vegetables Now More than Ever

Drought in California and other parts of the country is inevitable, and this year it is a "doozy." How can we all use our water more wisely for now and in the future? Cut down on the size of our lawns, for sure. Use drip irrigation more - yes. Recycle water - yes. Plant lots of vegetables and fruits - yes!! Home gardeners use between one quarter to an eighth as much water to grow edibles as do commercial farmers, so this is the year to grow your own!

Mulching, wise watering, drip irrigation, reusing water and installing a rain barrel are some of the many ways in which we can save and reuse water. [Click Here](#) for water saving tips, techniques and resources in this article by guest author Rosalind Creasy.



A large flower/vegetable bed is part of Rosalind Creasy's water-saving front yard.

April in the Trial Garden: Spring Care for Garlic Plants

by Lindsay Del Carlo, Trial Garden Manager



Fall planted garlic is starting to grow vigorously thanks to a relatively warm late winter and mild early spring in our northern California trial garden. If you plant garlic like we did in late September or early October while the soil was still warm, the planted cloves of seed garlic are able to sprout and produce a good root system before the weather turns cold. Now that spring weather has come at last, those roots are helping to push up thick, healthy green leaves and are beginning to look something like huge scallions on steroids or adolescent leeks.

The thick straw mulch that we laid in place at planting has worked very well to protect the soil during the winter weather. After lifting up the mulch to inspect the soil, the texture still looks in good shape, not like it would if it was just left exposed to the elements. The mulch will further benefit the plants because it holds in soil moisture in hot weather and provides a habitat for beneficial soil microbes.

Now that it is early spring, we start fertilizing the garlic every 3-4 weeks with liquid fish emulsion, which has a high nitrogen content. When we planted the garlic, we amended the bed with a granular organic fertilizer, but now adding liquid fertilizer during active growing gives the developing bulbs that extra boost. It will encourage the garlic to grow nice hefty bulbs and discourage early flowering. I mix 4 tablespoons of fish emulsion to each gallon of water and simply sprinkle it onto the bed. If the plants do send up flowers (called "scapes") make sure to break them off to encourage the growing bulbs underground.



As soon as the rains start to taper off, danger of frost is over and the weather warms up but is still moist, we need to monitor the plants for garlic rust. This is a fungal disease that attacks garlic, onions, chives, shallots and other alliums. Yellowish orange flecks soon turn to bright orange on the undersides of leaves. These bright orange flecks are the spores that spread and will live in the soil. This is debilitating to the plant and can result in smaller garlic bulbs. It is really important to deal with it before it can take hold and spread. We have been using a safe and effective organic bio-fungicide called Actinovate. We have found it to produce great results on many different crops when used early at the first sign of disease. Actinovate is readily available online and is becoming increasingly more available at good garden centers nationwide.

Check our [blog](#) in a few months for our next episode of garlic growing which will cover harvesting, curing and storing your bounty of delicious homegrown garlic bulbs.

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Best Wishes, *Renee Shepherd*



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