

Tis the season for garlic festivals!

As I write this, I am one day away from the Newmarket Garlic is Great Festival, and just home from attending the Perth Lions Garlic festival last weekend. We will now look forward to the Stratford Kiwanis Garlic Festival on Saturday September 11.

Garlic Festivals are a great way to meet some of the best customers we have. People love coming out to the various festivals to see all the different varieties as well as all the different ways to prepare and store our crop. Also since some festivals twin with a local farmers' market, customers can buy produce to cook with garlic: fresh tomatoes, eggplant, herbs and spices. Everyone can sample different ways of preparing garlic and make their once-a-year purchases and contacts for future requirements. Garlic is a great draw if you are thinking of getting a festival started in your area and, once established, can bring in tens of thousands of customers.

The 2010 crop is now all harvested, dried and is all too quickly selling out. Some growers are already planting the 2011 crop in the north and those of us further south are thinking of cracking seed for planting early in October. This year the crop was reasonable with some variation depending on local rainfall and growing conditions. The demand for the crop can best be described as simply overwhelming! The demand for local fresh garlic has probably never been this great. The demand for garlic for seed for 2011 is even greater. Consumers, after years of being served up only the crap from China, are demanding locally grown garlic, and, growers are attempting to rise to the challenge.

Every week new requests for garlic seed come from as far away as Nova Scotia and British Columbia. With the current demand for seed, your association will be looking at production from bulbuils as a way for growers to make extra seed available in the long run, while also dealing with issues around bulb and stem nematodes. We will have a small amount of "clean seed" available to plant from our research project at New Liskeard. We will be working with researchers at Ridgetown to get advice for planting and raising garlic from bulbuils and will get this posted on our website at www.garlicgrowers.on.ca as quickly as possible.

In closing, enjoy the remainder of the selling season and good luck with planting.

Mark Wales

Source – The Grower 2010 (www.thegrower.org)