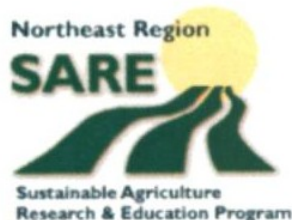


# Multi-Farm Garlic Grower Project



*Made possible by a Northeast SARE  
Farmer/Grower Grant*



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by

**Richard Sisti**

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***We wish to thank SARE for funding this grant through the Northeast SARE 2002 Farmer/Grower Grant program.***

## **Goals of the Multi-Farm Garlic Growers Project:**

Garlic consumption in the United States has been increasing over the last several years and garlic represents an excellent "high-value" crop for growers and an excellent opportunity for value-added. With small farms, the planting and harvesting of garlic is very labor intensive and often farmers cannot grow enough garlic to market efficiently due to labor constraints.

Catalpa Ridge Farm developed a program to network with other farmers via share cropping to alleviate the labor problem. With help from extension, we will worked with local community groups to incorporate garlic braids to supply value added marketing of the garlic grown and harvested by these farmers. We proposed to also form a Garlic Support/ Discussion Group of local farmers and growers of garlic to share knowledge, varieties, problems, cultural methods, etc. This will help growers avoid the pitfalls of working in isolation.

What this project proposed to do was to develop the value added possibilities and gather the results from this project and publish and disseminate the information. These results could assist other small farmers in the Northeast to start similar projects using our model.

## **How to start a Share-Cropping project with other farmers:**

Garlic is a very labor-intensive crop and labor is a difficult issue for most small farmers in the northeast. By two or more farmers getting together to plant the garlic in October and then again the following July to harvest it, a relatively large amount of garlic can be planted and harvested on the farm quickly.

- Seed garlic was provided by the project leader
- Planting days were set up where the share-crop farmers would meet at the farm and organize the planting scheme.

- this involves keeping the different varieties separate
  - popping the garlic bulbs so the cloves are ready for planting
  - planting the garlic
  - labeling the variety in the field
  - mulching
- The farmer on whose farm the garlic was planted is responsible for weeding and other maintenance such as field preparation. This was tracked on a worksheet. ***Excel worksheets on diskette can be obtained by requesting them either via e-mail or phone.***
- Harvesting days were agreed upon so the share-crop farmers would again meet and harvest the garlic.
  - due to the nature of the garlic varieties, this was carried out on a number of different days and tracked on the worksheet.
  - Varieties were kept separate for wholesale & retail sales
  - The storage & curing process in our case studies was all performed at the farm where the garlic was planted. When it was time to sell the garlic, the garlic was then split between the farmers.
- The garlic harvest is split 50/50 amongst the share-crop farmers. The reasoning being:
  1. Seed garlic is provided by the “project leader”
  2. Planting is shared
  3. Weeding is the responsibility of the farmer on whose farm the garlic is planted. Also the storage of the garlic remained at the farm where it was planted until ready to be divided between the farmers.
  4. Harvesting is shared
    - A total of **120 lbs** was planted
    - A total of **350 lbs** was harvested
- About 70 lbs of garlic was placed into the value-added program with the garlic braids, swags & wreaths being made through a cooperative effort with local county extension service & county master gardeners. The garlic harvested off the farm placed into the value-added program was also split 50/50 after the braids were made. This allowed the share-crop farmers to not only share in the harvest but share in the value-added program as well. This was the agreed amount of garlic to place into the value-added program; no “magic” formula was used.

### **How to start the Value-Added Program:**

We worked with Rutgers Cooperative Extension & the Sussex County Master Gardener Program. Un-cleaned garlic was supplied to Brian Oleksak of Rutgers' Cooperative Extension who put together instructional

classes. These were started using the video tape and booklets bought with SARE grant funds. About 70 lbs of garlic was placed into the program. About 30 braids & swags and 3 wreaths were made by the Master Gardeners, some were decorated and some remained plain. The braids and swags averaged about 1 to 1/2 pounds each, and each wreath was about 5 1/2 pounds. Each was labeled with a card (*see enclosed sample*) showing the SARE logo with the notation: "*This garlic braiding project is part of a cooperative effort between Rutgers' Cooperative Extension of Sussex County & the farmers involved in the "Multi-Farm Garlic Growers Project" SARE grant.*" Garlic recipes and garlic hints were also included on the card as well as information to join the Garden State Garlic group.

There was potential to include using local community groups (4H clubs, Boy & Girl Scouts, etc.) to design & assemble decorative swags & braids to use as a fund raiser, but this was not undertaken during this project.

**Ideas for Outreach & Education:**

During the early spring a **garlic support/discussion group** was formed. This was accomplished by mailings, phone calls, e-mails and networking at conferences. We also had sign-up forms at the State Fair, farmers markets and other events during the year. Farmers, home growers and any lovers of garlic were welcome.

The objective was to :

- Bring people together to share knowledge & cultural methods

While not totally organized in the formal sense, we continue to build a mailing list to network further during the winter.

**Report & Analysis of our findings using the models outlined above:**

**Share Cropping:**

One farm could no longer participate in the program due to problems arising from the death of the primary farmer the previous year. A new farmer was added into the program and three farmers partnered in a mechanical planter. This further decreased the planting time. Over 2 acres of garlic was planted mechanically this past October using the share-crop model with three farmers involved, Rich Sisti, Dick Moran and John Krueger. The share-crop model will be followed through to harvest in 2003 and will probably continue in years to come.

**Value-Added:**

Sales of the braids, swags & wreaths were disappointing. The display of the braids & wreaths however were a major attraction at different events throughout the year and the braiding demonstrations held by the Master Gardeners were well attended.



- 20% of the garlic braid/wreath sales were donated back to the Master Gardeners.
- The Master Gardeners learned a new craft during this project which can then be taught to others, such as community youth groups.
- Braiding demonstrations were well attended and a major attraction at two events during the course of the project.
- During these events we did have sales of un-cleaned garlic for the do-it-yourself braiders who learned during the demonstration and from the handouts provided.
- Master Gardeners assembled a garlic cookbook for distribution at farmers markets and events over the course of the summer.

We hoped that sales would increase during the holiday season, but they did not. Even though sales were disappointing, this part of the project will continue as the garlic braids & wreaths were a great addition at various event set-ups.



**Outreach/Education - Garlic Support/Discussion Group:**

The formation of this group and the outcome far exceeded our original expectations. Here are a few of the ideas that were discussed:

- Social
- Newsletter
- Growing Tips
- Reference Library
- Educational
- Share Seed Stock
- Grower List
- Recipes
- Garlic Tasting
- Create Market Leads
- Braiding Class
- Develop New Products

*Plan on having a group social in February 2003*

*In the winter, the first newsletter will be put together*

*Tips to be submitted to the newsletter*

*NOFA-NJ has agreed to maintain a reference library*

*On going education by GSGG members at events & functions, such as Sussex Farm & Horse Show Tomato Tasting with a Garlic Presence!*

*Through the newsletter & gatherings*

*To be published with the newsletter*

*To be published with the newsletter*

*Events to be scheduled throughout the year.*

*Current project includes working with Rutgers Cooperative Extension and local youth groups. More information will follow in September. This is in progress....*

*Such as garlic infused honey, etc...*

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The mission of Garden State Garlic is **“to educate and promote the growing and eating of good garlic”**. Further discussions lead to organizing an event and this became the Garden State Garlic Gathering!

**Overall findings:** The Multi-Farm Garlic Growers project findings did assist in helping growers avoid the pitfalls of working in isolation. Time was saved and the farmers benefited by sharing the labor. Most of the garlic sales were derived from single bulb “gourmet” garlic sales at various events during the year. This garlic was graded using yet to be published Jersey Fresh Grading standards and as seed garlic at the Garden State Garlic Gathering. There were some garlic braid & wreath sales, but these were not encouraging. The braids & wreaths did add value overall, as they were attention getters at the events.

#### **Site conditions that affected the outcome:**

The weather we had during the fall, winter and spring was the major contributor to poor yields and crop failures this past year. During the fall and winter we had very dry & warm weather, so warm that the over-seeded oats over-wintered & helped increase the weed problem (oats usually don't over-winter in our area). The spring was very cold & wet and a lot of garlic was lost. Despite these problems, which will historically occur in different years, the share-cropping model did work very well and will be continued.

#### **Economic findings of the project:**

Saving of time was the major benefit, especially for a small farmer who often works independently. The project involved multiple farmers. Overall sales of garlic at events, farmers' markets and the value-added project did yield additional income. This was most evident during the various events where garlic was sold. The large quantity available and the different varieties offered did have an effect on garlic sales, based on previous years.

Other farmers who have never grown garlic that were set up at the farmers' market became interested enough to purchase garlic seed to plant for harvest next year.

#### **Have results generated new ideas?**

**Garlic Variety Display** - Our initial display of over 60 varieties of garlic was exhibited by both Rich Sisti & Roman Osadca at the Sussex Farm & Horse Show-New Jersey State Fair. New categories for submitting garlic braids & wreaths were added for exhibitors and over 8 different individuals exhibited. The display was very attractive and was a show stopper. Additional names were added to our mailing list from this exhibit. This display has grown to over 100 varieties at this point between Rich & Roman and at least 90 of these were the basis for our educational display

at the Garden State Garlic Gathering. One bulb was displayed on a small blue plate with a professionally printed card with name, description, type, history, etc.



**Lending Library** - NOFA-NJ has agreed to maintain a lending library of garlic information once the Garden State Garlic group finalizes the bibliography.

**Garlic Gathering** - A cooperative effort to produce the first Garden State Garlic Gathering was undertaken in the summer of 2002. This included principle members of the Garden State Garlic group, the management of Lafayette Village, The Sussex County Marketing Association, Rutgers' Cooperative Extension and the Lafayette Village Farmers' Market Association. This was a one-day event which brought farmers locally and from Pennsylvania to sell garlic, garlic seed and garlic related products such as garlic vinegar. The event had great pre and post press and was attended by well over 1000 people. This far exceeded our expectations and so much interest was generated that we have outlined additional ideas in a SARE grant proposal for 2003. The garlic gathering offered

garlic & garlic seed for sale, garlic tasting, display of over 90 varieties of garlic and a garlic braiding/wreath making demonstration by the Master Gardeners to name a few. It was held in conjunction with the Lafayette Village Farmers' Market which increased sales to the farmers set up

with their produce, cheese, flowers, organic produce, honey, etc. and also increased the sales for the store owners who rent space in the village.



**4H Involvement** - We supplied garlic for planting by the local 4H youth for their garden on the fair grounds. This garlic will be exhibited by them during next year's New Jersey State Fair.

**Event Marketing** - additional ideas have been outlined in a SARE grant proposal for 2003.

**Trial New Garlic Varieties in our area** – 2 farmers are involved in trialing new varieties to report on yields and length of storage. It was discovered during the project that some varieties did not hold up well over the season. This data is being gathered for next year.

**Have these ideas assisted in solving problems?**

The new ideas generated from the project were not problem solvers, but more on expanding the possibilities of sustaining income for the small farmer. The Event Marketing idea will help establish annual events which will produce additional income to the small farmer.

The new garlic variety trials will gather information to see what garlic varieties are better suited for certain uses in our area.

**What is next step:**

Assist new garlic growers, both farmers & home gardeners in our area through meetings and events.

Expand on the Garlic Gathering and other events in our area.

**February 2003**

**by:**

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