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A clove by any other name



By [Alex Fethiere](#)

Alex Féthière

Garlicana's Frog Leg shallots growing with volunteer kale and morels in 2020.

Enthusiasm about black garlic made me a garlic nerd. This wonderful and versatile condiment is made by fermenting whole-bulb garlic at 180 degrees Fahrenheit for two weeks, during which time it becomes something like a sweet balsamic vinegar taffy. It goes great with cheese and makes fine sauces and spreads.

I wanted to experiment with garlic of all types from all over the world. This desire led me to Garlicana, a boutique garlic farm in southwest Oregon that practices soil conservation and watershed restoration. Their incredible selection of rare and esoteric garlicks (70 at present!) and shallots is sure to pique the interest of even the most casual customer. They also offer true garlic seeds, which are best suited to the experimenter hoping to breed new garlic varieties.

This year is a particularly good time to stock up on garlic. The farm is going through some changes induced by high diesel prices, poor labor availability, water shortages and further challenges familiar to today's agribusiness. Garlicana will be scaling back production in 2023, and some of the rarities they've been offering for years will disappear.

They have garlic suited for different soil types and climate conditions, but it isn't sorted in convenient tables and lists. Instead, the catalog is an enjoyable ramble through the garlic explorations of Avram Drucker, including history, culinary properties, and plenty of geography. Think of the book "Around the World in 6 Glasses," but as a website and garlic-themed.

Storage characteristics are usually spelled out as well. If you plan carefully, you can have fresh garlic year-round, with more perishable varieties to enjoy shortly after the harvest.

Seven varieties of shallot are also available, which I recommend if you have a tight grip on your slug population. I was still at their tender mercies in 2020, and many shallots were underdeveloped because slugs ate away their tops.

I neglected my garlic propagation last year, so this year I'm looking for a similar spread of characteristics and regions. If, like me, you're not crazy about sulfurous garlic (which concentrates that quality when watered with

Harstine Island's sulfur-rich water), you might be interested in Belarus with its "very rich rounded flavor," Gadym Sarymsak which tastes "mild and vegetal" or Rossa di Sulmona which is "sweet."

Raised-bed planting has worked best for me. Regardless of soil amendment, in-ground planting never yielded very large or flavorful bulbs. The color may have been brighter in field-planted garlic because of the higher iron content of the native soil.

I was pleased to discover that Turban-type garlics have less cellulose in their leaves and stems, making them both easier to braid and better suited for garlic greens pesto. Like scallions, garlic greens are also edible - but palatability varies.

If you're looking for the best roasting varieties, Drucker suggests Shvelisi or Krasnodar White. I'm looking forward to making black garlic out of several types!

Postscript: I have greatly enjoyed writing for the Journal for the past two years, but unfortunately other pressing projects are demanding too much of my time and energy to continue writing this column. I look forward to returning to these pages and resuming the sharing and dialogue that have so enriched my time here.

■ *Alex Féthière has lived on Harstine Island long enough to forget New York City, where he built community gardens and double-dug his suburban sod into a victory garden. He can be reached at onlandist@gmail.com.*

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