The Garlic Belt
By Sarah Lindblom

It is high in nutrients and antioxidants, boosts the immune system, lowers cholesterol and blood pressure, and it’s delicious. Garlic is in the allium family also including onions, shallots, scallions, chives and leeks. Although garlic is one of the world’s most widely cultivated crops, not all garlic is created equal. Gary and Gayle Klingelhoets of Green Acres Garlic Farm grow hardneck garlic varieties near Buffalo, Minnesota. Gayle explains that it is much juicier and how over the years the Klingelhoets have carefully selected their favorite varieties for flavor, texture, and hardiness. With a little thoughtfulness garlic thrives in the silty loam soils of the crow river foodshed.

In the spring garlic comes out of its dormancy and sprouts above a thick layer of mulch. Chopped leaves is the Klingelhoets’ mulch of choice which can be worked into the soil after harvest to increase fertility. In early summer the garlic flower, or “scape,” is removed to encourage bulb growth and can be made into pesto, stir fried, roasted or pickled. Once harvested the garlic is cured and can store through the winter. Gary recommends using cover crops as a green manure—some of his favorites are buckwheat and rye—and top dressing with composted manure before mulching in the fall. He adds that you only water garlic as needed, if for example a dry spell occurs during bulb development. “You have to give back to the soil. You can’t always keep taking,” says Gary on growing garlic.

The Klingelhoets’ and other locally grown garlic can be found at farmer’s markets and community events such as the Minnesota Garlic Festival at the McLeod County Fairgrounds in Hutchinson on August 13th. Here you can find local garlic for planting and cooking along with other local farm and artisan products, a pop up restaurant, music, kids activities, and yes garlic ice cream.

Leech, Joe. Authoritynutrition.com “11 Proven Health Benefits of Garlic (No. 1 is my Favorite).” Nov 2015
Klingelhoets, Gary and Gayle. Green Acres Garlic Farm. Interview March 2016
http://www.sfa-mn.org/garlicfest/