

Springtime and Wild Garlic

About this time of year our kitchen wall displays a denuded garlic wreath which, though still beautiful and ornamental, is no longer useful because we have used all the garlic bulbs for a marvelous variety of things during the winter.

As the days start to get longer and warmer I start my daily salad walk to find the first wild greens such as chickweed, dandelion, mustard greens, plantain, wild garlic, etc. Fresh, wild garlic, tops and bulbs, chopped fine, adds a touch to any salad which is a real treat. Of course you have to be sure to dig deep enough so that the top won't break off leaving the bulb deep in the ground. Besides giving a zest to your salad, you are giving yourself a "shot" of what the old herbalists used as their miracle drug.

Until about 100 years ago this little herb was used widely by family doctors and herbalists and was proclaimed to have miraculous healing powers. Since the new, expanding discovery and marketing of money-making drugs, this lovely herb has been neglected. Now, with the revived awareness of natural foods, we should all start expanding our knowledge and use of this member of the onion family. For centuries, all onions have been widely proclaimed and accepted for their excellent food value. Of course, the strong, unmistakable, penetrating odor and lingering smell has been the unfortunate reason why so many people have avoided this "magic" potion. However, if the odor was removed most of the powerful healing properties would go too. You can use the new odorless perles or garlic and parsley tablets, but for some cases this does not prove as effective as the fresh garlic bulbs or even the dried bulbs.

I hope that this spring you will take advantage of one of nature's bountiful remedies and be a winner in preventative medicine. Many times I've heard people complaining that they just can't get rid of all the wild garlic which grows in their lawn or garden and I, of course, reply, "Don't try to get rid of it and don't throw it away - Save it! It's one of the best natural food remedies available - and for free!"

Start by using the garlic bulbs or cloves fresh, plus the young tender green tops. The tops can also be chopped and frozen at this time for winter use. If you have time, peel some of the garlic bulbs and freeze them, then chop and use when needed. Another attractive way to preserve the garlic is to braid them into a wreath. Wait until the bulbs have reached a large size and are just ready to flower and go to seed. Pull out the whole plant being careful not to break it. It is sometimes necessary to use a shovel to loosen hard soil. Wash the ground off the bulbs and then while they are green and pliable, begin to braid them. Start by holding 6 bulbs together, using 2 for each strand, and begin to braid the stems together. Each time you turn the outside strand into the center, you add a new garlic bulb, holding it tightly and adding the stem into the strand to braid. As you work let the braid go into a circle making a small or large wreath. Wrap the last stem ends around the beginning of the wreath forming a loop for hanging, then tie the ends into a knot. Hang an let dry. Cut off bulbs as needed.

Garlic, a perennial vegetable of the Lily family, has strong antiseptic and germicidal properties. If you start to get a cold or sore throat just take a garlic bulb and hold it in your mouth and suck it. The easiest way seems to be to put a bulb in each side of the mouth between the top gum and the cheek, and just hold it there for hours. This will absorb the poisons so renew about every 6 hours. Do not leave in mouth while sleeping. The herb books say this will stop a toothache too. T.B., colds, asthma or any respiratory infections including laryngitis, bronchitis, inflamed tonsils or glands all respond to garlic. A combination of sea kelp and garlic perles is said to help hay fever, catarrh and all chest complaints.

When studying the herb books and writings of past history we find this miracle cure was used for all intestinal disorders such as diarrhea, dysentery, worms, flatulence, etc. We are told that just by using garlic a complete change in the intestinal flora is possible, increasing the beneficial bacteria and decreasing the harmful bacteria.

This antiseptic herb has no side effects such as the synthetic sterilizing agents often have and so it should be used to kill the dangerous organisms without endangering the organisms that are so vital to the health of the body.

Garlic is used to lower blood pressure and some books say it will raise or normalize the blood pressure if it is too low. Some claim it will take away spots or blemishes of the skin, and if rubbed on pimples they will disappear without leaving a scar. The blood must be purified however so that new pimples will not form. Boils or ear infections will also respond to garlic treatment. Ulcers and sores and even cancerous tumors seem to respond immediately to garlic. It is especially effective for whooping cough or other night coughs, but it must be used in an entirely different and simple way. A poultice is made of chopped garlic and put on the bottoms of the feet and wrapped with a cloth. An old sock helps to hold it in place. First put vaseline or lard on the feet so that the garlic will not blister the skin. Its action is powerful!

Don't berate this lowly herb just because of its unmistakable odor. The strength and stamina it gives are more important than the strong odor, and chlorophyll from your green parsley or other green edible plants will help to counteract its potent, offensive odor.

Add garlic to your salads, soups, vegetables or meat dishes. Here are just 2 of our favorite recipes: Steam asparagus lightly. Make a white sauce (be sure to use whole wheat flour, butter and milk) and add chopped garlic. Pour the white sauce over the asparagus just before serving. To make parsnips, begin by browning cut garlic in butter then add the cup-up parsnips and let steam till soft.

If you prefer, instead of using the small wild garlic, you can raise the large garlic bulbs in your garden. They can be used to repel insects and for companion planting. Garlic and roses enhance each other. Garlic is also reported to be good for tomatoes. The oil fraction has recently been tested at the University of California and was found to be 100% effective in wiping out misquotes.

If you want to read some more marvelous stories about this mighty herb I hope you will go to such books as Culpepper's Complete Herbal, Nature's Medicines by Richard Lucas, Stalking the Wild Asparagus by Euell Gibbons, or the About Garlic book by G.J. Binding.

Let's all go garlic hunting for information, ideas, recipes and the plants, or course.