

Elephant World Garlic: Bigger proves to be better

By GEOFF PARKS
For the Capital Press

AUMSVILLE, Ore. — Ken Haley has a short answer to the question of why he chose growing fist-sized bulbs of elephant garlic instead of the much-smaller purple garlic.

He focused on elephant garlic, as the larger bulbs produced brought nearly five times the profit of purple garlic.

“You do the math,” he said. “The elephant garlic is more mild, but yields giant cloves.”

Born in Cape Cod, Mass., but moving across the country over his lifetime, Haley, 70, has always farmed site-specific crops. But it was living in Coos Bay, Ore., in 1999 where he got a passion for growing garlic and began to gather seed stock prior to moving



Elephant Garlic World

Examples of Elephant Garlic World's chief product in packaged and ready-to-use form.

to the Willamette Valley.

“We always sell out our entire crop within two months,” said Haley, who with his wife, Mary, farm 12 acres that make up their Elephant World Garlic operation near Aumsville, Ore. They also lease a few

acres of nearby property.

He said his machine-planted 7 acres of garlic yield about 4,000 pounds per acre, nearly all of it for seed stock. The crop is non-GMO, pesticide free and Haley does not use any “artificial chemical fer-



Elephant Garlic World

A trailer full of just-pulled elephant garlic waits to be taken to the sheds at Elephant Garlic World in Aumsville, Ore.

tilizers.” His seed cloves are wholesaled to gardening catalogs, through mail order and direct to seed companies.

“We eat up a lot of dirt during planting and leave 4 feet of space between the rows to accommodate

the water-wheel planter we use,” Haley said. Cloves are spaced 8 inches apart in 100-foot rows. He noted that the “biggest thing” necessary in growing good elephant garlic is water.

“We need to put on an inch of water every week

and make sure the fields are weed-free,” he said. A typical planting for the elephant garlic is 150 cloves per 100-foot row.

Harvest is from early to mid-June each year, and after that he has a three-month “window” with a cover crop of peas, purple-top turnips, Daikon radish, crimson clover or yellow mustard seed planted to restore nitrogen levels and suppress weeds.

“We need a few dry days to let the bulbs cure outside after we dig them,” he said, “then it’s into the drying shed for a month or two” before workers clean off the roots and tops and get them ready for shipping.

He said until the COVID pandemic hit, his routine after the June harvest was to ship in August and plant next year’s crop in September. He normally sold out after March of the following year, but now, he said, he is lucky to make it through December with product.

“People buy it up quickly,” said Haley. “Everybody wants it.”



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