

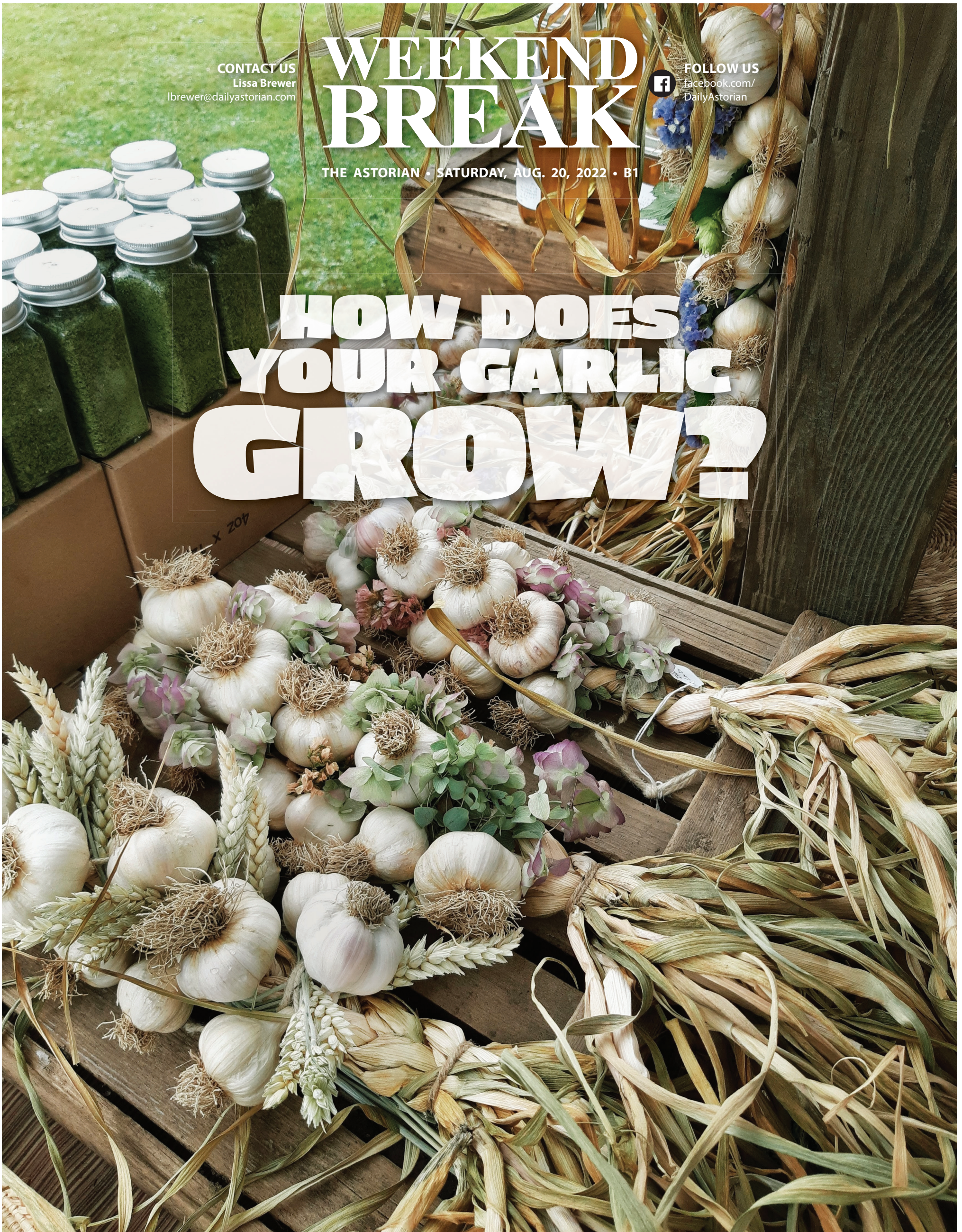
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HOW DOES YOUR GARLIC GROW?



A harvest awaits, with decorative items made from garlic cloves on display.

Clatskanie Garlic Festival to celebrate harvest

By M.J. CODY
For The Astorian

We may never see a year like this again in our lifetimes," Ian Glasser said. He was talking about this year's remarkable garlic crop.

Glasser, of Columbia Gorge Garlic, along with other growers, artists, bakers, crafters and artisans, will bring garlic and heirloom tomatoes to the Clatskanie Garlic Festival, set for Saturday.

"It's been unbelievable," Darro Breshears-Routon said, chiming in to express her excitement about the season.

"We want a dry harvest, not have to pull bulbs out of the mud. But this is the best garlic year we've ever had," Breshears-Routon said. "The bulbs are huge. I'm so excited for people to see and taste the garlic this year."

She, along with husband Steve Routon, started the Clatskanie Garlic Festival nine years ago. "We wanted to build our own home and find a south facing slope for cool summers and warm winters to grow vegetables," Breshears-Routon said of the pair's move to Clatskanie from Portland.

After hand-building their home, they spent a year reclaiming a meadow. They became enchanted with garlic after reading Stanley Gardner's book, "A Garlic Testament: Seasons on a Small New Mexico Farm."

"The soil preparation was epic," Routon said. He's a firm believer that the secret to growing good garlic in the Northwest is the soil. The pair call their farm "Tilthworks" after tithing, the cultivation of the land.

Their primary crop now is "a modest little allium: garlic," as Routon puts it. Currently, the couple's garden produces 13 garlic varieties along with carrots, beets, broccoli, cauliflower, corn and beans. "Tilthworks is his home to some serious garlic geekage," he said.

"We do the planting and pulling by hand," Routon added. "No machinery is involved. It's hard work but we enjoy it. The book really caught our attention,



Handling a set of garlic gloves, ready for the event.



Blanck and Inchelium Red, two locally grown garlic varieties, on display.

CLATSKANIE GARLIC FESTIVAL

Clatskanie Farmers Market, 60 Lillich Street
10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday
www.clatskaniefarmersmarket.com

how garlic brings people together and captures a community. I just loved the Clatskanie Farmers Market so much and thought, 'Hey, why not do something different to really set our community apart and draw people from around the area? Why not celebrate garlic?'"

That idea seems to have caught the attention of others. This year, more than two dozen vendors will ply their wares at the festival, including quilters, woodworkers, jewelers, candlemakers, soapmakers and bakers.

The Wild Locals, a regenerative vegetable and berry orchard, will again offer a selection of garlic sauces, pesto, dips and spreads along with fresh jun, a fermented drink similar to kombucha. Elemental Acres, a small, veteran-owned farm in Goble that focuses on humanely-raised pork, beef, and chickens will be on hand, as will Columbia Gourmet Mushrooms from Rainier.

More garlic can be found at the festival from Ian's Columbia Gorge Garlic, accompanied by apple cider from Carola Wines. Tilthworks, of course, will be there with garlic and produce as well as fresh artisan bread, honey, and Breshears-Routon's popular braided garlic strands.

"We have a really good mix of everything, including lots of music," she said of the festival. "People really put their heart and soul into it."

M.J. Cody is a freelance contributor to Coast Weekend and Our Coast Magazine.