



M&M Garlic came about in 1996. We started growing 35 lbs. The first few years, we planted, weeded, and harvested all by hand.

Now we plant about 1200 lbs with a seeder made by Dave with some ideas from some neighbors. All the garlic is planted in double rows, 12" between the rows.

There are many different types of garlic, and we have tried growing about 20 different varieties over the years. We have bought seed from Ontario that had snowy white skins on it. We planted it and harvested garlic with purple skins/stripes through it. The cloves are even a different shape. Garlic depends on soil types and weather in the area. We have a sandy loam.

We now have a softcore that we are not really sure of the variety, and Music, a hardneck variety.

The Music is planted in the fall time, and then covered with straw just before the snow falls to prevent winter kill. The softcore variety is planted as early as possible in the spring. We don't worry about planting pointed end up or down. Sometimes the garlic grows down and around but very rarely. The seed lies on its side most of the time, so the stem grows horizontal, then up. That may not be good enough for some farmers, but for our use, it works. It doesn't have to be perfect; it just has to look good in a jar.

We have a modified cultivator and it is good when the plants are small. After the plants are a little a bigger, everything is hand weeded. It is much easier to weed after the cultivator has gone through. For many years we weeded hard soil, since the ground sat all winter and was hard packed for the growing season.

Music is harvested generally in the mid to end of August. The softcore is ready by the middle of September, and then the rush is on to get the Music back in the ground by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in September. We purchased a garlic digger that undercuts the garlic then vibrates it over tines and drops off behind. We still pick it up by hand and haul it to dry. We dry it on trays with fans and heaters if the weather is not cooperating. The sun is the best dryer.

Why did we start in garlic? I can't really say for sure. Diversification was the biggest factor. It was evident we were not going to get very far just growing seed, as at that time, garlic was still not openly accepted. Even I didn't know much about garlic – growing or cooking. So we started processing in 2001 and built our own processing plant in 2002. Three years ago we became federally inspected so we could sell to retailers outside of Saskatchewan.

We used facilities at the Food Centre in Saskatoon to help develop large batch recipes for the few products we were doing. Since then, we have developed new recipes and techniques in our own facilities.

We received some funding at the time to begin our processing techniques from the Saskatchewan Government. There are some groups available to help out with information to help processors it just takes time to find specialized areas, such as our own. We are members of the Saskatchewan Food Processors, and Saskatchewan Herb and Spice Association. SaskAg Regional Offices have a lot of good information to help out producers, as well.

Our line of products has specialty garlic items like pickled garlic, garlic jelly, dried garlic, pickled scapes (the stem of the garlic) and fresh minced garlic. We added to the line up to attract customers that may not want just garlic. Items such as pickled carrots, cucumbers, beans, asparagus, and sugar snap peas are now available. Our fall times are very busy with everything coming within a very short window.

We begin with asparagus at the end of May. Most of it is purchased from another Saskatchewan grower, but we do have a few hundred plants. I prefer to buy it though. It makes for a very long day if you start by picking asparagus, then pickling all day for 3 weeks.

At the end of June, the scapes grow on the hardneck garlic. We snap them off when they are tender and pickle them. They are quite garlicky.

The beans, cucumbers and peas are next, and soon after that carrots. Garlic harvest starts before we are done carrots. And then the tomatoes! We make a salsa using our own tomatoes and onions. It is a very busy fall, since we also grain farm.

We sell most of our products at craft fairs. Now we are into stores in neighboring Provinces. One of our customers in Ontario purchased the scapes for her martinis. There are many unique ideas out there, and garlic is a great tasting medicine!

We process about 15,000 jars in a year all combined, and harvest about 5000 lbs of garlic. Our original building was built in 2002. It is 1200 sq ft with a commercial kitchen. In 2008, we built on an additional 4000 sq ft to our garlic building to include more storage space and possibly better storage facilities.

We are as big as we can get at this time. We do a lot of the work ourselves, with help from 3 other part time seasonal help. It is still hard to find employees, able to work part time, available that day, and able to do the intensive work we do. We enjoy what we do and will keep on at this production level, but to get any bigger would mean automation at some level.

It has been a large learning curve for us – from growing to marketing our products. It has had its good points and bad. It has always been hard work, and lots of it, but definitely rewarding.

It is very rewarding providing food from our back yard to all over Saskatchewan. We are very proud to do what we do, and the greatest reward is the thanks we get back from our customers.