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Former UCSC student returns to share his passion for garlic

Former UCSC student returns to university to share his passion for the stinking rose

By Terri Morgan

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SANTA CRUZ >> A former UC Santa Cruz student will share his passion for growing garlic with the public at a workshop at his Alma mater.

Pete Rasmussen was studying marine biology more than a decade ago when he abruptly shifted his focus from life in the ocean to sustainable agriculture after visiting the Alan Chadwick Garden on campus. Now the official garlic grower at his family's Sandhill Farms in Eden, Utah, Rasmussen this weekend will be teaching home gardeners and the proprietors of small farms the ins and outs of growing garlic. Rasmussen's mentor — Orin Martin, who is the manager of the Chadwick Garden — will team up with him for the workshop, which is set for Saturday, Oct. 25.



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Staff at the UCSC Farm, where the workshop will take place 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., are thrilled about the event.

"It's really exciting to have Pete join us," said Martha Brown, senior editor for UCSC's Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, which oversees the farm. "He's so passionate about this subject, and very knowledgeable."

That passion has taken Rasmussen to a four-acre farm in the mountains of Utah. Sandhill Farms, of which he is a co-owner, produces 35 rare and unique varieties of heirloom garlic. The bulk of the crop, which weighs in between a ton and a ton and a half annually, is sold through the farm's online store.

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Now a seasoned professional, Rasmussen, who splits his time between Santa Cruz and Utah, still vividly recalls the first time he encountered a crop of hardneck garlic at the Chadwick Garden.

"I found myself surrounded by rows of plants I had never seen before — sturdy stalks and symmetrical, spear-shaped emerald leaves," Rasmussen said. "What captivated me first was the striking beauty of the garlic plant."

He was further intrigued when he saw tall wooden stakes labeling the various rows with names like Carpathian, Georgian Crystal and Transylvania. The mysterious names, along with the porcelain white and marble purple striped bulbs he discovered hidden under the soil, ignited his love for garlic.

He plans to share that love with others at the workshop, and adds he is excited to lead the workshop with Martin.

"It's a dream come true to co-teach with Orin Martin, my first garlic growing mentor," Rasmussen said.

Martin and Rasmussen will address everything a beginning garlic grower needs to know to produce a successful crop, including the multitude of different garlic varieties available for planting. How to properly prepare the soil, care for the crop throughout the growing season and harvesting tips will also be addressed.

Since seeing is believing, the two will demonstrate how to plant garlic. To help budding garlic growers decide which varieties to plant, the workshop will also include tastings of raw and roasted garlic. Garlic seeds and culinary garlic will also be available for sale.

"I hope participants will leave with a new curiosity into the world of heirloom garlic," Rasmussen said.

Garlic Growing Workshop

What: A workshop on growing garlic taught by Utah-based garlic grower Pete Rasmussen, a former UC Santa Cruz student, and Orin Martin, who oversees UCSC's Alan Chadwick Garden.

When: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25

Where: UCSC Farm. For parking info and directions, visit casfs.ucsc.edu (<http://casfs.ucsc.edu>).

Cost: \$30 for general public, \$40 at the door. For Friends of the UCSC Farm and Garden, \$20, or \$30 at the door. UCSC students get in for \$15, \$20 at the door. To pre-register, visit garlic2014.bpt.me.

Details: Visit casfs.ucsc.edu (<http://casfs.ucsc.edu>)

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