

Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

October 1, 2017

This Month's Tasks...

The golden days of fall are such a delight...but they do remind us that there are things to do before winter:

All you Brussels sprout growers, if you haven't done so, this is the week to pinch out the tips of the plants to hasten the growth of the sprouts along the stem. If you have good-sized sprouts forming already, you don't necessarily have to do this, but if your plants only have tiny little sprouts at this point, do force them to make sprouts by pruning the tops. If the plants don't develop their crop this fall, you won't be getting sprouts this winter.

Cleanup: If your apple trees had scabby apples this year, be extra careful to rake up all the fallen apple leaves and compost them. Not to worry if the compost heats up or not—as long as the leaves decompose by spring, the overwintering spores of apple scab will die. Also, those squash leaves with powdery mildew are fine to put into the compost pile. Things it would be best not to compost: tomato plants with late blight, diseased potatoes or other roots crops with symptoms of root diseases (especially garlic and onions). Leaves with rust diseases, such as leeks and garlic, can also be composted. For photos of apple scab, garlic rusts and other problems, see my database of pest and disease photos: http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/book_photos.html

Garlic Planting: Later in October is an ideal time to plant garlic for next summer's harvest. Earlier planting in warm, dry soil increases the risk of infection from a very common disease called Blue Mold Rot (*Penicillium* spp.). [see <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/root.html#169>]. The fungus spreads on the garlic cloves, so if you plant healthy garlic and plant after the soil has become cooler and wetter, there is little likelihood of infection. Enrich the soil with compost, lime the soil if it needs it, and plant only the most perfect, unblemished cloves. Once fall leaves are available, put a good thick layer of leaves over the garlic bed to insulate the roots and protect the soil from heavy rainfall.

Tree Bands: If winter moth caterpillars [http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/leaf_chewers.html#21] ate holes in your tree leaves early last spring (apples and other fruit, oaks, other deciduous trees), then mid-October is good timing to put up sticky tree bands to intercept the females before they lay eggs. The female moths can't fly so when they emerge from their cocoons at the base of trees they have to walk up the trunk to lay eggs out on the branches. Spread insect glues (Tanglefoot, Tangletrap) available at garden centres on a foot-wide band around tree trunks. The band can be anything that is easy to wrap around the trunk: plastic food wrap, waterproof package tape, or other waterproof material that can be spread with glue. If the tree has deep crevices in the bark, wrap a layer of cotton batting around the tree first, pushing it into the cracks to block moths from crawling under the sticky band. Don't put the glue directly on bark—it will damage young bark and will also keep on catching insects—mainly beneficial ones--during the growing season (and also kid's hair, dog's tails, shirt sleeves, etc.). The moths lay eggs from late October to January so you can remove the tree bands in February.

And no, do not remove the insect netting or floating row covers from your carrots, yet. There are still plenty of carrot rust flies flitting around so wait until the end of October—unless it snows first (JUST kidding....)

Looking farther ahead: Unfortunately, there seems to be an increasing probability of a La Nina weather pattern (colder and wetter than 'normal', whatever that is....) again this winter, so give some thought to preparing for severe weather in case we see a repeat of last year:

- collect lots of leaves to mulch the soil (and also collect lots to make compost and to stockpile for next summer's mulching)

- stake up tall and top-heavy overwintering plants, including Brussels sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower: use stakes, bamboo poles, tomato cages

- pile plastic sheets or tarps ready to throw over beds of leafy greens in case of extreme cold; also have rocks, bricks or heavy boards handy to hold down the plastic in high winds

Upcoming Events:

Saturday, Oct. 21: 10:30-12:30 Food Preserving: Fresh Storage and Freezing; 1:00-3:00: Dehydrating and Canning. Brighthouse Branch, Richmond Public Library. These workshops are free, but pre-registration is required: <http://www.richmond.ca/parksrec/about/registration.htm>

If you are interested in taking one of my 10-month organic gardening courses in 2018, now is the time to register.

The class in Victoria at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific is pretty much full, but you can ask to be put on the wait list and may get in as not everyone that signs up is able to attend. To read more and sign up: <http://hcp.ca/year-round-harvest/>

My Year Round Harvest course on Salt Spring, sponsored by the SS Garden Club, also has 10 classes between January and October. Topics include feeding and preparing soil, year round planting schedules, how to grow a variety of vegetables and fruit, preserving, seed saving and managing pests and diseases. To receive a schedule of dates and topics and info on how to register, contact me directly gilkeson@shaw.ca