

## Gardening Newsletter

By Linda Gilkeson

July 20, 2016

### Editing, seeding, planting & propping

There are quite a few crops for winter harvest that can be sown from now through mid-August (see below)—but where to fit them into your bursting garden? The main thing I am doing this week is ‘editing’: pruning back plants that have overrun their space, removing what I don’t like, don’t need, have too much of, as well as the odd plant that is growing poorly. Don’t feel you have to keep something just because you planted it. If the flavour is disappointing or nobody in the family eats it, go ahead and take it out. I hate to do it, because it is vigorous and pretty, but my huge yellow ‘Sunbeam’ zucchini has gotta go—the fruit doesn’t compare in quality to ‘Romanesco’ or the dark green zucchinis I am growing and I need the space. You might have too much lettuce or it is starting to bolt, pea vines that are petering out or have pea enation virus (unfortunately quite widespread this summer; for a photo of infected peas, see: <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/foilage.html#146> ). If plants aren’t contributing to the productivity of your garden, now is the time to compost them or use them as mulch.

**Seeding:** Kale and chard planted earlier this season will continue through the winter, but you might want to sow additional plants by the end of the month to have more plants to pick from in the winter when they are not growing and replacing leaves. This week is the last window for sowing beets and kohlrabi to have them a good size before winter: if you are sowing this late, be right on top of thinning and watering to make sure the seedlings grow as fast as possible.

From now to early August is the last planting window for seeding the larger hardy leafy greens, such as leaf beet (or perpetual spinach, a type of chard with a finer stem), collards, Chinese cabbage and other Asian greens, mustard spinach (Komatsuna), leaf mustard greens, leaf radish, leaf turnip (Mizuna or Namenia), broccoli raab, also winter radishes/daikon and white turnips. I wait until the end of the first week of August to seed spinach to avoid having them go to seed prematurely.

**Planting:** It is time to transplant seedlings of winter broccoli and cauliflower. If you didn’t start them yourself, check out my April 2, 2015 message: <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening-pdf/Winter%20Gardening%202015%20-%20Apr%204.pdf> on the difference between winter and summer varieties, since wholesale nurseries continue to grow summer broccoli and cauliflower varieties for sales this time of year (after years of trying to raise awareness, just ask me if am I frustrated about this? !@#%\$@%). Overwintering purple sprouting broccoli varieties include ‘Red Spear’, ‘Early Rudolph’ and ‘Cardinal Late’. The main winter cauliflower you will likely find is ‘Galleon’, but you might be lucky and find ‘Purple Cape’ (Salt Spring gardeners can get it at Chorus Frog farm stand) or others.

It is too late to succeed with Brussels sprouts if you plant small seedlings now: time and time again, gardeners have found that planting this late just doesn’t work for south coastal British Columbia. Unfortunately, some gardening sources still say to sow Br. sprouts in late June or even July, which leads to disappointment among the Br. sprout fans. The plants have to be big enough to have sprouts started forming by the end of September, which means they should be a minimum of a foot high by today. If well-developed sprouts are not showing by the end of October, they won’t develop in the spring (they do send up edible little flower shoots, though).

It is also too late to plant seedlings of winter cabbage varieties that take 120 days or more to mature ('January King', 'Danish Ballhead'). The good news, however, is that there are many others that don't take that long and if you can buy starts now, they should make nice cabbages before winter. Look for plants of varieties that take under 90 days to mature. Most cabbages, including savoy, are hardy enough for most coastal gardens so extreme hardiness isn't usually a consideration. One group of cabbages can be started from seed this late and that is the sweetheart cabbages (e.g., 'Caraflex', 'Greyhound', 'Early Jersey Wakefield'): these are small, 50-60 day cabbages and if you sow them now, they should fill a cabbage blank in your winter garden.

**Propping:** If you are growing apples, pears and late plums, etc. you may be seeing branches starting to bend down with the weight of fruit. I was even sent a photo of a fig with heavily laden, bending branches. The weight of the fruit alone can break a branch and a windstorm can do an awful lot of damage. Any way you can devise to provide temporary support works. You can drive in a stout stake beside the bending branch and use a piece of soft cloth to tie the branch to the stake. I make the strips of cloth a couple of inches wide to avoid cutting into the bark. Lower branches can be propped from below using a notched board to hold up the branch, but do pad the branch where it is resting on the board. If trees are against fences, they can be tied in to the fence, using a wide, soft tie to protect the bark. Small branches within a tree can sometimes be supported from larger branches above with a soft tie as well. You might also need to remove fruit if you didn't thin in June when you should have. As a rule, if there is good fruit set over the whole tree, then you only want to leave ONE apple or pear where there was a blossom cluster. If there are 2 or 3 fruits still present in each cluster, remove some—really, your tree will thank you and, what's more, it will be able to produce a good crop next year, which it may not do if it overbears this year.

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See my home page <http://lindagilkeson.ca/> for a link to a pdf of a month-by-month winter harvest planting chart that you can print out.

My speaking schedule for 2016 and 2017 is now fully booked. Check the calendar on my web site for talks, workshops and gardening classes in your area, also for book sales and to see hundreds of colour photos of pests, diseases and disorders to help you identify problems.

All of my previous gardening messages are archived on my Gardening Tips page: [http://lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html) To unsubscribe from my mailing list, please reply to this message OR let me know the number that appears at the bottom of the message. I need that to find you in my many mailing lists.