

# Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

June 30, 2016

## Carrot Day is Here

Just a quick reminder as you celebrate tomorrow: July 1<sup>st</sup> is Carrot Day too! It is time to sow the carrots as well as beets, rutabagas, turnips, winter radishes that you want to eat over the winter. The first week of July seems to work fine for carrots for most gardens in the region. You can sow beets and turnips a week or two later with good results, but if you start seeds much later than that, you will run out of growing days to mature the roots. They will still be edible of course, just small. If they are small in the fall, that's all...because plants and roots grow as large as they are going to get by about the end of October. Plants don't grow noticeably in the winter months and because carrots and other roots are biennial plants, in the spring they will just send up flower stalks rather than grow larger roots.

And here is a review of how to start seeds in the summer: The soil is too warm right now for good germination of carrot (and lettuce) seeds so you should shade seedbeds until the seed has germinated. This will take 7-8 days for carrots, 3-5 days for other roots (check daily and take off the cover as soon as the first tiny shoot of green appears). Shading also keeps the seedbed evenly moist for the germination period. Once your seeds are planted and the soil is watered, cover the beds with anything that shades the soil until the first tiny green shoot shows. You can use burlap, old beach towels, newspaper, curtain fabric, shade cloth, but do not use floating row cover (Remay), which is designed to let in light and keep in heat. If the weather continues hot, you might want to add another layer of opaque white plastic (e.g., cut from a compost or chicken feed bag) on top of whatever material you are using to shade the soil. Right now it sounds like July 1 will be partially cloudy and the daytime maximums won't be too extreme: ideal for seeding those carrots. Check daily for germination and water as needed (usually every 2-3 days).

If you are going to use insect netting or floating row cover to prevent carrot rust fly from laying eggs on the plants, note that this is only effective if the netting is in place before the carrot leaves show above the ground. Adult rust flies are very acute at detecting the scent of the tiniest carrot leaflet so make sure there are no holes in the netting or gaps around the lower edges, which should be held down tightly to the soil (with stones, lengths of scrap wood, etc.). You can put the netting on the bed at sowing time and lay the shade material on top of that until seeds sprout. Or, since carrots take at least a week to germinate, you can cover the seedbed with burlap for the first 6 days, then remove it and put on the insect netting; if it is still hot at that time you can drape shade cloth over the netting for another couple of days.

Regular readers will be familiar with my recommendation to move to insect netting instead of floating row cover fabric, which is flimsy and doesn't last long (but it does work and if that's what you have, do use it). The sturdy, knitted monofilament insect nettings now available have a 7-year guarantee, but I suspect they will last longer than that. Look for ProtekNet, available on Salt Spring from Chorus Frog Farm; near Victoria from Russell Nursery on Wain Road; in Duncan at Dinter Nursery (they may have a similar product: Enviromesh) or bug your local nursery to bring in a sturdy insect netting product. The ProtekNet distributor in Canada is Dubois Agrinovation in Montreal [www.duboisag.com](http://www.duboisag.com); they sell it in 100 m rolls (order the 60 gr mesh size). ProtekNet is sold mail order by William Dam Seeds <http://www.damseeds.ca> and Enviromesh is also carried by Amazon.ca. If you can't find the product locally or want to save money, get together a group of gardeners and order a 100 m roll from Dubois yourself—they will ship to individuals.

This week marks the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this newsletter, which I started in 2008 as way to remind gardeners on Salt Spring Island to sow their carrots and other winter harvest crops on time. There are now thousands of readers all over the coast of British Columbia and Washington state: Happy Carrot Day everyone!

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My speaking schedule for 2016 and 2017 is fully booked (!). Check the calendar on my web site <http://lindagilkeson.ca/> for talks, workshops and gardening classes in your area, also for book sales (including my newest: *Resilient Gardens 2016: Climate Change, Stress Disorders, Pest Update*) and hundreds of colour photos of pests, diseases and disorders to help you identify problems.