

# Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

July 18, 2011

## Planting for winter, reconsidering summer crops

Well, isn't this weather something....it just isn't warming up, is it? At this point, it is time to make some hard decisions in the garden about what is going to make it and what isn't. For example, my last planting of corn is only about a foot high right now so I pulled it all out today to make room for a bigger planting of winter broccoli and cauliflower. You might have some warm season crops (late tomatoes, peppers, winter squash, corn, melons, etc.) in outdoor beds that just don't look like they are going to produce much. Worse, they might be in the process of collapsing from root rot or leaf diseases that are thriving in this wet weather. If so, get 'em outta there and put in plants that enjoy this weather and will feed you all winter.

**What you can sow now:** Lettuce, kale, more chard, all sorts of Chinese cabbage and Asian greens, leaf beet, leaf mustards, leaf turnip, arugula, collards, kohlrabi. You can seed all of these directly in the garden this month. While in most summers you can sow these from the end of July into early August, this year I am pushing forward all of my seeding dates because it has been so cool. With my garlic harvested and space opening up, I am aiming at seeding these crops this week. [Note for Salt Spring: Foxglove nursery has a good selection of such winter crop seeds from West Coast Seeds, Salt Spring Seeds, Eagleridge Seeds among others].

Some of these, such as various kales and chard will also be available as seedlings from nurseries from now on to the middle of August. If you don't have time or space to grow from seed right now, you can buy plants later to fill up the empty spaces in the garden. It is too late to seed winter broccoli and winter cauliflower now, but you can also buy these from local nurseries over the next few weeks (see below for Salt Spring suppliers).

### My winter greens 'All Stars'

**Leaf beet:** A hardy chard, with finer stems and flatter leaves than Swiss chards. It has several names: Leaf beet/perpetual spinach (Salt Spring Seeds); Bietenra (Eagleridge seeds).

**Kales:** There are many kinds and all hardy. Leaves become milder, sweeter and more tender in the cold weather.

**Komatsuna (mustard spinach):** Not a spinach--it is in the cabbage/mustard family. Plants are very productive and hardy, with a large flat, tender leaves (and no mustard-y flavour). There is a purple Komatsuna also, which is a lovely colour, but is nowhere near as robust or productive as the green variety.

**Lettuce:** Plant now for fall harvest; plant until mid-August for winter harvest. Check the seed description before buying to make sure they are frost hardy. I know I can rely on 'Winter Density', 'Arctic King', 'Rouge d' hiver' and 'Continuity', but there are also other hardy lettuces.

**Leaf turnip:** AKA 'Mizuna' or 'Namenia'. Very hardy, with pretty, fringed leaves that are mild and tender in winter salads.

**Leaf mustards:** 'Osaka Purple', 'Green Wave' and others are excellent winter salad greens.

**Corn salad/mache:** Small, super-hardy plants; perfect substitute for lettuce in winter salads as they are mild and crisp. Broadcast seeds at the end of August in any spare garden space, including under squash vines and tomatoes, annual flowers and any other plants that are finished in the fall.

**Spinach:** Sow in early August for fall through next spring harvest. At the moment my fave is good old 'Long-standing Bloomsdale', but all varieties I have tried have done fine on this planting schedule.

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## Local sources for winter crop plants

### Salt Spring:

-Chorus Frog Farm stand (Rainbow road across from the swimming pool): Plants are out on the stand now, with more coming: kale, purple sprouting and other broccoli; leafy greens.

-Foxglove (corner of Atkins Rd): Plants will be out for sale in a couple of weeks. They will have a good selection of purple sprouting broccoli, winter cauliflower (including my fave: 'Galleon'), kale and hardy greens.

-Stowell Lake Farm: I will let you know when they will be holding their annual plant sale of veggie starts.

**Victoria:** On Saturday, the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre (1216 North Park St.) started selling kale, purple sprouting broccoli and cabbage starts; they have limited amounts so you might want to phone before you go over there: (250) 386-9676.

Other garden centres and farm stands around the region will have plants--just make sure you don't end up buying summer broccoli or summer cauliflower starts as these will not be successful.

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For info on my books [including my new best seller, **Backyard Bounty**] or to check my 2011 and 2012 schedule for talks and presentations in your area see: [www.lindagilkeson.ca](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca)

You can read all of my previous messages on the Salt Spring Energy Strategy website: [www.saltspringenergystrategy.org](http://www.saltspringenergystrategy.org)