

Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

April 17, 2012

Haskap, olives and veggie starts

People have been asking me if they are too late to start their squash and cucumber plants--nope--it is not too late at all. This is a pretty good time to start seeds indoors (it is much too cold for such tender plants outdoors). I plan to wait until the end of April to start these myself, as I find that my squash plants get so big by the time it is warm enough to set them out in late May that I have to keep moving them to bigger pots. For gardeners in the warmest areas of Victoria and the Lower Mainland, you might be able to set your plants out a couple of weeks earlier--but it depends on how soon this cooler-than-normal spring weather comes to an end.

Any time now, plant your potatoes, peas, strawberries, lettuce and hardy greens, onion sets. But don't worry if you haven't planted these yet--there is plenty of time to get a good crop. I always keep back some seed potatoes to plant in May for a late crop of new potatoes. I carry on planting peas every few weeks up until the end of June for pea that continue yielding into fall. Incidentally, for peas planted late (May & June), it is a good idea to sow varieties listed as 'enation resistant'. Pea enation mosaic virus is a disease spread to peas by aphids in the summer. Early spring peas are usually done by mid-July and I haven't (so far) seen this disease on such early plants. But it only takes one aphid to show up in the summer to infect plants, so planting resistant cultivars is a good way to prevent damage. There are EMV resistant snap peas (Cascadia, Sugar Ann), shelling peas (Aladdin) and snow peas (Oregon Giant), so something for everyone.

Haskap berries: This year I found some space in my garden to squeeze in a couple of haskap plants (AKA honeyberry), which is a interesting type of honeysuckle with large, early, blueberry-like fruit. With focused plant selection by Saskatchewan researchers, there has been advances in quality of this very hardy fruit. Ironically, there is a question of their long-term cropping success on the coast because, in our warmer winters, plants may start to grow too early, leaving them vulnerable to damage from later cold weather. (This is becoming a issue with other fruit as well due to a changing climate--something I will talk about in my workshop on April 29, described below). But back to haskap: They are compact, pretty bushes, growing up to 1.5 m high. Local nurseries (e.g., Foxglove on Salt spring) have a selection of varieties and you can learn more about their culture at:

<http://www.fruit.usask.ca/articles/growinghaskapinCanada.pdf>

Olives on the coast? The Saturna Olive Consortium is a nursery on Saturna Island dedicated to growing olives in this region. This year they again have a variety of Italian trees for sale (Frantoio, Leccino, Maurino and Pendolino) and are also offering a small inventory of other cultivars in limited quantities. See their web site for details, cultural and ordering information: <http://olivetrees.ca/>

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For Salt Springers:

Foxglove Farm & Garden Supply still has 3 varieties of certified organic seed potatoes in stock (as well as a wider selection of varieties). Also their early veggie starts are coming in as well.

Chorus Frog Farm stand is in business: (255 Rainbow Rd.-across from the swimming pool). Organically grown veggie starts, including lettuce, kale, Asian greens, Swiss chard, peas, fennel, onions, leeks, herbs, flowers and strawberries; broccoli, cauliflower & cabbage will be out soon. Pauline notes that they only use sterilized, organic potting soil for all their starts.

My upcoming classes:

The following still have room for more participants (note: this Saturday's Backyard Bounty class in Richmond is FULL up):

Victoria April 29.: **2 workshops** at Horticulture Centre of the Pacific. Call to register: 250-479-6162 or see: <http://hcp.ca/courses/>

1. Resilient Gardens for a Changing Coastal Climate. 11 am - 1 pm. Design adaptable fruit and vegetable gardens, what you need to know to become a resilient gardener in this changing climate. HCP members \$25 Non-HCP Members \$35

2. Pollination 101 (AKA Sex in the Garden) 2 pm - 4 pm. Did your squash do well last summer? Learn what affects pollination in vegetables and fruit, why some plants don't fruit, how to attract pollinators, hand pollinate and avoid cross-pollination when saving seed. HCP members \$25 Non-HCP Members \$35

Vancouver May 5: UBC Botanical Garden: **Backyard Bounty: Organic Gardening Course**. 9:30 to 4:30. Grow the most vegetables and fruit in the smallest space (with the least work!). Soil preparation and organic fertilizers, gardening methods, schedules for year round food, crops in containers, protecting winter crops and organic pest management. Cost: \$60 public, \$50 UBC garden members & students. Registration:

<http://ubcbgggardening2012.eventbrite.com/> To contact the organizers: 604-690-5375 or garden.programs@ubc.ca.

Duncan May 12: Vancouver Island University, Duncan: **Backyard Bounty: Small Garden-- Large Yield**. 9:00 to 4:00 (same description as above). \$69+HST. See:

<http://www.cc.viu.ca/ce/brochS12.pdf> To register, contact VIU 250-746-3519 or Toll free: 1-888-747-3519

For info on my books or to check my 2012 schedule for talks, workshops and gardening classes in your area see: www.lindagilkeson.ca

No need to copy and save all these messages: you can read all of my previous messages on the Salt Spring Energy Strategy website: www.saltspringenergystrategy.org