

Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

December 30, 2012

Cold snap; the coming season

With colder weather predicted (and some sun too!) over the next couple of days, I thought I would remind you to check on the mulches over your winter vegetables. After all the rain--and for some of us, periods of heavy wet snow--mulches are now packed down and soggy. If you still do have some stockpiled leaves or straw, you might want to add another layer to provide more insulation over beds of root crops and around the stems of leeks, winter broccoli, etc. If temperatures look like they might drop below -5 degrees C at night I will throw a sheet of plastic over my beds of leafy greens for another layer of protection. Your root crops will be fine under mulch no matter how cold it gets, and, of course, anything under snow when it is gets cold will also be fine, too. If leafy crops do get damaged, even if they look terrible, don't pull out plants: most will send up a new crop from the roots in early spring even if the tops are killed completely by winter.

I hope everyone is enjoying the tasty carrots, beets, cabbage, Brussels sprouts that come out of the garden at this time of year. I am just about to indulge in one of my favourite winter soups: Cream of celeriac made from 1 big celeriac root, 1 big leek, broth and a dash of nutmeg. Chop the vegetables, simmer until tender and whiz with a blender to desired creaminess (optional: add potato with the other veg; after blending, add some milk/cream for a richer soup).

The 2013 seed catalogues are coming out now by mail and online, so we can start thinking about the coming planting season. While you are ordering, don't forget to get seeds for next winter's crops. Suppliers do run out of some kinds of seeds by mid-summer. Also, with planting on the right dates critical for successful fall and winter harvests, you don't want to have to wait for a seed order to arrive when it is time to plant. I am particularly careful to make sure I order plenty of carrot seed to be ready to plant a big bed on July 1--with this crop, a delay of just a couple of weeks, can result in a miserable crop of little roots.

Many thanks to all of you who sent an opinion on binding for the new edition of my bug book: it is now being printed and by unanimous request will have a coil binding. It will be in my hands in mid-January and at that time I will update my web site with mail order information. My web site will also display the over 200 insects and disease photos from the book so you will be able to see them in colour to help with identification.

Year Round Harvest 2013: There is still space for more participants in my 10-month organic gardening course held at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, Victoria (509 Quayle Road). The classes are on a Sunday afternoon once a month, over the season. For dates, topics to be covered, cost and to register, see: <http://hcp.ca/commed-year-round-harvest/>

Please note: The Salt Spring course is full, but any Salt Springers that would like to attend the above HCP course, are welcome to travel with me.

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For info on my books or to check my 2013 schedule for talks, workshops and gardening classes in your area see: www.lindagilkeson.ca

I will have copies for sale of all of my books, including the new edition of *West Coast Gardening: Natural Insect, Weed & Disease Control* at my talks.

You can read all of my previous messages on the Salt Spring Energy Strategy website: www.saltspringenergystrategy.org