

# Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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## Powdery mildew; last seeding & feeding

That dusty white coating on leaves known as powdery mildew is showing up 'big time' these days. To see what it looks like on various plants, go to <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/foilage.html#147> and scroll down to images for page 147. I wrote a detailed note on it last fall, so have a look at my Sept. 10, 2012 note:

[http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html) In addition to the controls described in that note, there is a new biological control product called Serenade®. It contains bacteria that attack fungi and is registered for some fungal leaf diseases, including powdery mildews. The product is widely available in garden centres. I have not used it, but would appreciate hearing how well it works from anyone who has. Note: One reader was told by someone to spray a mix of copper and lime on her squash, so just in case you have heard this, too--DON'T DO IT! It will fry the leaves right off the plants.

Also see the Sept. 10, 2013 note for information on controlling cabbage aphids, which are beginning to show up on Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage and other plants. There is a photo in my aphids section:

[http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/sap\\_suckers.html#49](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/sap_suckers.html#49)

Last seeding for winter harvest: Late August to the first week of September is time to sow corn salad and last plantings of winter lettuce, arugula, leaf radish and other fast growing greens. Look for any bit of open soil you can find to tuck in a patch of seeds. This morning I seeded hardy lettuce in between the stumps of my early sweet corn, which has all been picked. Rather than pulling up the roots and disturbing nearby plants, I cut the stalks off close to the ground and sow seeds between them (next spring those corn stumps will be easy to pop out of the soil, leaving behind a rich addition of organic matter to the soil from the decomposed roots). In the warmest microclimates and south into Washington, you can still sow spinach, leaf mustard and Chinese cabbage, but don't delay.

Underseeding: Another place to sow winter greens is right under the plants of warm season crops. Gently move aside the vines of squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers enough to scatter seed over the soil. This is where saving your own seed comes in handy--with half a pint of corn salad seed or a baby food jar of lettuce seed on hand, you can afford to experiment with scattering seeds anywhere you want. Corn salad is a small plant so you can sow it pretty thickly. When the canopy plants are finished in the fall, cut them off at the soil line so you don't disturb the greens growing underneath.

Other timely tasks: Time to do a final thorough weeding and thinning of carrots, beets and other crops for winter eating so they can grow their best. All too soon growth will slow as the days get shorter and cooler so make sure crops have everything they need to take advantage of these last warm days of summer: space, water, perhaps a boost of liquid fertilizer.

How to know if plants need a nutrient boost? If leaves are pale, rather than dark green, they may need some nitrogen. Winter leeks should be at least as wide as your thumb by now, carrots should be at least baby-carrot sized and winter cabbage heads should be starting to form heads in the centre of plants. Brussels sprouts don't need to start forming until end of September so don't worry about a lack of sprouts for now.

What to use for liquid fertilizer? Compost or manure 'tea' or liquid fish fertilizer (follow mixing directions on the bottle) work fine. To make manure/compost tea, put a shovelful in a big bucket and fill with water. Wait for 2-3 days (no longer), until the water turns dark with soluble nutrients, then dilute it to the colour of a weak cup of tea and water plants. In new gardens or in poor soil, you might want to use the tea every few days. Given the risk of spreading human diseases from pig, chicken and cow manure from commercial farms I would avoid those sources; manure from horses, rabbits, sheep, goats doesn't carry this risk. [For 'pee-cyclers': diluted urine is an excellent and safe fertilizer with a ratio of NPK quite similar to what plants need. Be sure to dilute it though--1 part urine to 20 parts water--or it will burn plants].

Upcoming talks:

Saturday, Sept. 14: Richmond residents can attend 3 free workshops I will be giving on at the Hamilton Community Centre. *Trouble shooting common gardening problems; Keys to growing your most successful organic garden yet; Fall lawn care*. Preregistration is required: see <http://www.richmond.ca/register> or phone 604-276-4300.

Sunday, Sept. 15: I will be at Salt Spring Fall Fair, 1pm – 2pm, in the Demo Tent, with a tips for getting a good crop of carrots, beans and other veggies.

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For colour photos of pests and diseases, info on buying my books, including the new edition of *Natural Insect, Weed & Disease Control*, or to see my upcoming schedule of workshops and gardening classes, see: [www.lindagilkeson.ca](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca)

You can read all of my previous messages archives on my web site under the **Gardening Tips** page or on the Salt Spring Energy Strategy