

Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

July 9, 2013

Dreaming of winter greens

This is the month to sow the many hardy leafy greens you want to eat next winter. Things to sow over the next week or so include kale, Swiss chard, leaf beet, collards, kohlrabi, chicory and hardy endives and broccoli raab. You can sow quicker maturing greens, such as Chinese cabbage and other Asian greens, mustard spinach ('Komatsuna'), mustard greens, leaf radish, mizuna and spinach from late July to early August. If you are in a warm microclimate, you can get away with sowing a week or two later. If your garden is right on the cool, foggy coast, then sow right now (see my winter harvest planting [chart](#))....which reminds me:

A note on planting dates: My timing recommendations are for the south coastal islands and lower mainland of British Columbia, and for areas west of the Cascades in Washington state. Originally meant to be a local service, my emails have leaked to a much wider area. I have heard from gardeners as far south as Olympia that my timing recommendations work well for them, but as you go farther south, you will have longer daylengths and should be able to sow later. People east of the Cascades in Washington and the interior of BC won't find my planting recommendations much use (if you want to 'de-subscribe', please let me know the number at the bottom of your message so I can find you on one of the 17 mailing lists I maintain.)

Back to the leafy greens: If you have already planted biennials, such as kale or Swiss chard, earlier this spring--those plants will be fine through the winter. You might want to plant more now, however, so you will have enough for winter harvests. We are used to plants quickly replacing leaves as we pick in the summer, but it is too cold for plants to grow in mid-winter. What you see in the late fall is what you get for winter harvests until growth picks up again in March.

A lot of people harvested their garlic a little earlier than usual this year because of the warm weather, which makes a nice open spot to start more greens. It is getting late to sow carrots in this region and have mature roots before winter, but you can sow beets, turnips or daikon (winter radish) now and they should be a good size before winter.

If you didn't sow purple sprouting broccoli, winter cauliflower and winter cabbage last month, look in local nurseries and markets for started plants. Be alert for the 'right stuff', however: avoid summer cultivars of cauliflower (such as Snowball) and summer broccoli, which are unfortunately, still sold by some suppliers. On Salt Spring: Chorus Frog Farm stand on Rainbow Road has excellent plants for winter harvests: Brussels sprouts, Langedijker red winter cabbage, green heading winter broccoli, purple sprouting broccoli, white & purple cauliflower on the stand. Foxglove nursery will also have a variety of winter veggie plants around the end of the month.

Winter squash notes: Winter squash fruit need time to mature, therefore most should have set fruit by early August to have enough growing time. Depending on how large the fruit are, I allow 2 fruit per plant for big squash and 3 or 4 on small-fruited plants. This year, with the early warm weather I may keep a couple of more fruit per plant, depending on the vigour of the plants and how many fruit set by the end of the month. Remove later flower and fruit to allow the vines to put all their energy into ripening the early squash. Once you have enough winter squash set on each vine, you can always eat the later surplus flowers --there are lots of recipes!

For either summer or winter squash, if the small squash seem to grow a little, but then shrivel and rot or fall off, it is because the flowers were not fertilized: See the very bottom photo: <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/disorders.html#176>

If flowers aren't being pollinated by bees, you can hand pollinate: Check each morning for flowers, pick a male flower (the ones with the yellow dust in the centre) and dab the pollen onto the centre of female flowers (the ones with the miniature fruit below the flower). For details on squash pollination, see my July 1, 2011 message: <http://www.saltspringenergystrategy.org/docs/Winter%20Gardening%202011%20-%20July%201.pdf>

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