

# Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

December 8, 2014

## 'Tis the Season

The season I am referring to is climbing-cutworms-season (For that OTHER season, see a great gift idea below).

Climbing cutworms: The big fat caterpillars of this invasive species (the large yellow underwing moth, *Noctua pronuba*) are active all winter, whenever the weather warms up. They chew ragged holes in the leaves of garden vegetables of all kinds: carrot tops, lettuce, cabbage family and any leafy greens. They particularly like to get into the centre of a head of lettuce or Chinese cabbage and virtually hollow it out. The damage looks similar to slug damage and both slugs and cutworms can be found chewing on the same plants. When it is really cold the cutworms burrow into the soil or leaf litter so the cold weather we have had so far won't have done them any harm. There are all sizes of these caterpillars around right now, from half-grown up to very large ones. I was quite surprised to see how large some of them were already this fall since their usual lifecycle is to finish development in April/May. For photos of the cutworms as well as pupae (which you will find in the soil in May), eggs and adult moth, see the 4 photos on this page: [http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/leaf\\_chewers.html#25](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/leaf_chewers.html#25)

The only reliable approach with these critters is to catch them in the act and dispatch them. In mild weather, such as we have today, go out as it is getting dark around 4:30 pm with a flashlight and look for them on the leaves of plants. There probably aren't many out there: it usually just looks like there must be an army chewing away, because a single caterpillar can do so much damage. So only finding a few caterpillars may be all that is needed to put an end to the damage.

Great gift for gardeners: The Salt Spring Garden Club has just published a cookbook: *Eating From a Salt Spring Garden*. This delightful and extensive collection of recipes would make an excellent gift for all your friends interested in eating locally or expanding their culinary repertoire of things to do with seasonal vegetables and fruit. There are tried and tested recipes for such favourites as kale chips, leek soup, basil pesto, tomato sauces and apple crisp, but there are also many unusual recipes for main dishes, salads, soups, pancakes, desserts and preserves. You can get it by mail order from the Salt Spring Garden Club: <http://ssigc.moonfruit.com/#/buy-cookbook/4586643604> If you order this week, there is time to get the books to you before Christmas.

Salt Springers can buy it on the island at Country Grocer, Salt Spring Natureworks, Salt Spring Books and Foxglove Nursery.

My 3 books are also still in stock and orders received by Dec. 15 will certainly have time reach you before Christmas. See: <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/books.html>

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See my web site <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca> to see hundreds of colour photos of pests and diseases to help you identify problems.

My teaching and talking schedule for 2015 is now fully booked, so check the schedule link on my web site for talks, workshops and gardening classes in your area.

All of my previous gardening messages are archived on my Gardening Tips page: [http://lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html)