

Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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Start Sowing for Winter

Yes, I know, it is hard to think about next winter but it is time to start seeds of overwintering broccoli and cauliflower for harvest early next year. And from now on, every couple of weeks for the rest of the summer is another planting 'window' for various crops. I have posted my winter harvest planting chart on my home page [http://lindagilkeson.ca/pdf/Linda Gilkeson Planting Schedule.pdf](http://lindagilkeson.ca/pdf/Linda%20Gilkeson%20Planting%20Schedule.pdf) so that you can print it out and post it to remind you what to plant. The chart shows sowing dates, which can be either directly in the garden or in seedling flats. Given the difficulty of keeping things cool and watered this summer I am opting for starting more of this year's crops in flats where I can mind them more closely. Or start them in the garden in a small nursery area that you can keep shaded and watered easily.

First, broccoli and cauliflower: Start seeds any time from mid-June to the end of the month. If you want to buy seedlings later, I suggest you check with your local nursery or seedling source to find out what varieties they will have for sale. The problem with wholesale suppliers to the nursery trade growing the wrong broccoli and cauliflower varieties for winter continues, so check on the varieties before you buy starts. For the long-term, you could encourage knowledgeable local growers to grow the right stuff so you don't have to rely on wholesalers.....

Winter broccoli varieties to look for include: generic 'Purple Sprouting Broccoli' or a PSB blend; 'Red Spear' (has the longest cropping period); 'Red Arrow' (also fine); '[Extra Early] Rudolph' (it is very early, but has a short harvest period), 'Cardinal Late' (indeed late, but with a bigger central head and a nice long harvest period). You also you might see white cultivars such as 'White Star' or '9-Star Perennial'.

Note: 'Summer Purple' sprouting broccoli is now available too, which may or may not be hardy enough to survive winter (I would love to hear from anyone who has had this one make it through the winter--or not). For winter cauliflower, the only one you will see is 'Galleon', though if you can still find 'Purple Cape' seed, grab it. Both are excellent in quality and hardiness.

Carrots and other roots: Long-time readers will know what's coming: Carrot Day! Part of my celebration of Canada Day on July 1st is to sow a huge bed of carrots for winter (US readers might want to celebrate on the 4th of July). This timing ensures carrots have enough growing time to reach a good size before growth stops in late fall. You can probably get away with sowing as late as July 10th if you have really fertile soil (or live further south in Washington), but plantings later than that are usually disappointing. I have had good results with all carrot varieties I have tried so grow the ones you like. Plant a lot--you want enough to supply your household with carrots from October to May. The same timing is good for rutabagas and beets, though the latter can be started a bit later and still produce a nice crop. Getting carrots and other seeds safely germinated in hot weather remains a challenge: for notes on this see my June 4, 2015 message: http://lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html

Carrots are particularly tricky in hot weather because gardeners in most areas should cover carrots with insect netting before the tiny shoots emerge to prevent carrot rust fly attack. Given the early start to the season and warm weather we can expect these insects to squeeze in an extra, even larger, generation by the end of summer, which means unprotected carrots could be heavily infested. SO how to juggle covering systems to keep the soil cool and to keep off insects? Here is my solution: Since carrots take at

least a week to germinate, I sow the seeds, water the soil well, then cover with burlap for a week, watering as needed. Then I remove the burlap and put on the insect netting with shade cloth draped over that. You could skip the burlap covering stage and just put on the bug mesh covered with shade cloth at seeding time, but I expect you will need to water a bit more often.

Netting keep off insects: Sturdy knitted monofilament insect netting lasts much longer than floating row covers, such as Remay (it works fine, but it is flimsy). On Vancouver Island, ProtekNet is available at Russell Nursery on Wain Road, near Sidney. Dinter Nursery, south of Duncan, has Enviromesh. ProtekNet is also sold retail by William Dam Seeds <http://www.damseeds.ca> and wholesale in 100 m rolls by Dubois Agrinovation in Montreal www.duboisag.com (order the 60 gr mesh size). Enviromesh is also carried by Amazon.ca and Amazon.com (what isn't!?!); the full product name is: Agralan M571 Enviromesh Standard.

Other veggies to start soon: The first week of July is good timing to sow radicchio, various hardy endives, kohlrabi and any additional kale and Swiss chard you want to add to what you already have growing in the garden. Any varieties of these are usually fine for our winters.

See my web site <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca> for hundreds of colour photos of pests and diseases to help you identify problems. All of my previous gardening messages are archived on my Gardening Tips page: http://lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html

My teaching and talk schedule is fully booked through April 2016 and the rest of the year is rapidly filling, so check my schedule on my web site for talks, workshops and gardening classes in your area.