

Gardening Newsletter
by Linda Gilkeson
December 2, 2018: First Cold Snap

Just a quick note that the first cold weather of the year is forecast for this week, with night time lows by Wednesday and Thursday forecast to drop well below freezing in some parts of the region. That's the signal to finish mulching everything if you haven't done so already. Now is the time to add mulch right up over the tops of carrots, beets and other roots to make sure the shoulders of the roots don't get nipped by frost. I like to have at least 6 inches of leaves on top of carrots, etc. when really cold weather starts.

Tip: When you harvest your root crops this winter, stick in a marker of some kind to show where to start digging next time—with all that mulch on top you can't tell what has been harvested already.

It has been so warm this fall that many things have continued to grow, which is all to the good if some of your cabbages or Brussels sprout plants were rather small at the end of the summer. I keep getting inquiries about garlic that has started to grow: but not to worry! Just mulch over the top and don't worry if they poke up prematurely (they will poke their way through most anything by spring) because they are quite hardy (same goes for spring flowering bulbs which are also starting to send up shoots in many gardens).

If you are keeping outdoor citrus trees going by plugging in Christmas lights or plumbing heating cables, make sure they are working this week. I am at a colder elevation than many of you so I surround my lemon and lime trees with sleeves of clear plastic topped with several layers of floating row cover fabric to allow ventilation. I have been using plumbing heating cables which don't draw much power (80 w) and have a built-in thermostat so they are only on for freezing temperatures.

Keep on trapping spotted wing *Drosophila* to eliminate as many overwintering flies as possible. This is increasingly being seen as a useful strategy for driving their numbers so low over winter that it takes the few survivors longer to build up a damaging population next summer. With any luck that means you can get most of your soft fruit and berries harvested before the number of maggots become noticeable. I caught over 3000 in one vinegar trap in October and November and they just keep on coming.

Best wishes to everyone for the holidays! And remember it is less than 3 weeks to shortest day of the year, after which we will see the light coming back for another gardening year.