

## Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

June 15, 2019

### Sowing Winter Brassicas; Crop for Fall

Now I know how large radishes can get when you leave town for 3 weeks...and also that grapevines cannot be trusted to stay in their own lane when no one is home to keep order! Anyway, I am back home just in time for an important planting window:

Mid- to late June: Time to sow the hardy winter broccoli and winter cauliflower for harvest next spring. I prefer to start seeds in pots on my kitchen counter where I can keep a close eye on watering and where they are safe from slugs, but you can certainly sow directly in the garden if you prefer (shade the seedbeds until the plants germinate).

Most broccolis for overwintering are purple sprouting varieties ('Red Spear' is a particularly productive PSB, as is 'Cardinal Late'); there also some white varieties. Sprouting broccoli produces a smallish central head, which is followed by a huge number of side shoots that go on and on for months until you get tired of picking them. They become very large plants, much taller than central head varieties of broccoli, and are hardy enough to live through all but the coldest winters if you want to leave them in the garden (but be aware these 'perennial' bushes get huge). As I have mentioned in previous messages, knowing what varieties to sow became complicated with the introduction of *summer* purple sprouting varieties a few years ago. Winter PSB makes heads in response to the cold chill of winter (it does not produce heads the same summer it is planted), whereas summer PSB does make heads the first summer....or at least it should. It is not uncommon for some summer PSB plants to act like winter PSB, only producing heads the following spring.

There are very few winter cauliflower varieties left in circulation. 'Galleon' is the only white cauliflower you are likely to find on the Canadian side of the border (everything else is a summer cauliflower), while US gardeners have a couple of varieties left. 'Purple Cape' is an excellent, reliable purple winter cauli, but hard to find [available from Salt Spring Seeds <https://www.saltspringseeds.com/collections/greens-seeds>]. Trying to grow summer varieties for overwintering is a recipe for failure, therefore check varieties before you buy seeds or seedlings. [For new Salt Spring readers: Chorus Frog farm (on Rainbow Road) is the go-to place for the right varieties of their own organically grown winter vegetable starts on the island].

#### Other vegetables to sow now:

You still have time to sow cabbage for winter, but now you should plant varieties that take less than 100 days to harvest. You can also sow other summer crops to fill gaps in the garden or to extend harvests into late summer and fall: more bush beans, leafy greens of all kinds, beets, carrots and other root crops.

I always plant a last batch of peas at the end of June to produce peas into the fall. My late pea planting failed in the severe heat and drought of 2015, but this timing worked well in other summers.

If you are planting lettuce this month, look for varieties described as "heat tolerant" or "bolt resistant". Among them, the venerable old 'Red Sails' leaf lettuce is notably heat resistant as are Batavian

(crisphead) varieties (e.g., 'Anuenue' from West Coast Seeds). Be sure to shade seedbeds until they germinate because the soil is usually too warm for good germination of lettuce in the summer.

There is still time to sow the quickest varieties of zucchini and other summer squash (50-55 days to harvest). I always seed a couple of zucchini plants around the end of June to have vigorous young plants that resist powdery mildew infections in late summer—these usually produce well through October.

### **Pests of the month:**

Spotted Wing Drosophila: I am sad to say that I caught a female of this invasive fruit fly in my vinegar trap yesterday. I had caught a few after the cold weather of February so some obviously survived the cold, but hadn't caught any more until yesterday. Continued monitoring will show whether this is a rare catch or the beginning of a rising infestation. For a simple trap to monitor them in your own yard, see my message of October 2, 2018: [http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html) The point of a monitoring trap (you only need 1) is to find out whether the flies are present. If they are, you can prevent them from laying eggs in berries and cherries by covering the plants with insect netting. For photos of this fruit fly: <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/borers.html#95>

Tent Caterpillars: The numbers of this periodic pest are rising in the region, with Delta areas hit hard last year and Victoria gardeners reporting them this year. If you are in this year's infestation zone, you might be cheered to know the caterpillars are done feeding and won't reappear for the rest of this year. Defoliated trees will produce new leaves and most won't be noticeably set back, but if a fruiting tree lost all of its leaves, best pick off the fruit to give the tree a chance to recover. The wave of tent caterpillars will spread through the region over the next few years. After a year or two of high numbers in any one area, however, their numbers always collapse after diseases and natural enemies bring them under control. And then it will be 7-10 years before they build up again. The last great infestation on Salt Spring was in 2011 to 2012, so we are due for another wave of TCs, probably starting next spring or the year after.