

## Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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### Cold Notes

It was frosty last night, dipping a degree or so below freezing in many gardens. That is not low enough to damage hardy winter veggies out in the garden, but in case temperatures dip further tonight or this weekend you might want to add more mulch, if you have it, to beds of lettuce, spinach, and other greens. Or fluff up the mulch already on the beds, which has probably been flattened by this winter's snow and rain. If there is snowfall this weekend, that is all to the good, as it will further insulate plants. I am still hoping it gets cold enough for a night or two to really frost my Brussels sprouts and bring out their best flavour....

It doesn't look like the immediate forecast holds really cold weather, but, to review for newcomers to this newsletter, be alert to forecasts for the next month and a half (never trust a coastal February as anything can happen). Hardy leafy greens, hardy leeks (not all varieties are hardy), winter broccoli, winter cauliflower and cabbages are usually OK to -5oC (23oF). If it gets colder than that, it is a good idea to throw a tarp over plants. Since it is too cold for growth, it doesn't have to be a clear cover. Be sure to anchor covers down well with stones, bricks, etc. in case of outflow winds, which can be quite strong in an Arctic outbreak. Root crops, such as carrots, beets, parsnips, turnips, will be fine even in prolonged, very cold weather—as long as you have spread a good layer of mulch right over the tops of the plants to keep the 'shoulders' of the roots from being frosted.

I occasionally experience -7 to -9oC (16oF) at my elevation and have had uncovered winter broccoli and cauliflower plants survive that in good condition, but leafy greens, such as chard, spinach and lettuce take a beating if they aren't covered. If the worst happens and your leafy greens do get frosted to the ground, don't remove the plants. They usually come back strongly from the roots to produce a good crop in early spring. The hardiest greens, such as kale, parsley, corn salad are rarely, if ever, damaged by cold.

And REALLY, everyone, your garlic is just fine! If garlic shoots are poking up through the mulch now, not to worry—they are very hardy. If your garlic shoots are not poking up by now, don't worry about that, either—some varieties are later than others.

Unless there is a really extreme weather pattern setting in, I won't send a reminder out about covering plants, so just keep an eye on the forecast. And, if you find yourself shoveling cold white stuff, just remember that snow is great for your garden.