

# Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

December 29, 2024

## Plan a Year-Round Harvest; Seedy Saturdays

We are more than a week past the shortest day of the year, a turning point in the season I welcome as it means that days are getting longer. Although daylight is only about 3 minutes longer than it was on the 21<sup>st</sup>, the rate of change increases as we get closer to the spring equinox. By mid-January days will be noticeably longer by half an hour.

With the continuing warmer than usual weather this month, hardy vegetables are still growing. Even my summer broccoli is continuing to put out new shoots and Chinese cabbage and other leafy greens are still growing slowly, replacing leaves chewed on by slugs earlier in the season. It has been so warm that I have not yet put down the final layer of mulch that would completely cover the top of the carrots and other root crops, but the bag of leaves is ready to hand to be able to quickly cover the beds as soon as there is forecast of below freezing temperatures. While doing yard work the other day, I wasn't happy to see that buds were already swelling on some of my flowering shrubs because that makes them more vulnerable to cold injury if/when we have cold weather in January or February. That was what happened last winter, when after an equally warm December we had 6 days of very cold weather in mid-January that damaged or killed a lot of plants that usually are winter hardy in this region. Keep in mind that the longer we experience these warm winter temperatures the more vulnerable plants will be if it does get cold so be ready to act promptly to protect plants with extra mulch, tarps and plastic sheets.

Incidentally, you may already be seeing garlic shoots coming up, but not to worry: Garlic is remarkably durable and the shoots will be fine even if they poke up above the mulch that should be on the bed. Later on (late February or March) you can pull the mulch back to free up the shoots. It is too cool and light levels are too low for photosynthesis at this time of year so shoots that come up early due to the warm weather are often pale yellow or have yellow tips. The same goes for spring bulbs that are also showing shoots: All will be rectified when the growing season gets under way.

### New Year's Resolutions for Gardeners?

If you don't have much left to harvest in your garden at this time of year, here's a resolution suggestion: "I resolve to keep my food garden filled with productive plants all 12 months of the year". It just takes a little planning to keep our gardens stuffed full of productive plants all year round. The vegetables still outdoor in my garden (AKA my 'living refrigerator') were started during the growing season: some, such as leeks are sown early in the season (March) for large leeks for harvested through April. Most other winter harvest vegetables (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, chard, carrots, beets, parsnips, turnips, celeriac and many kinds of lettuce and



leafy greens) are sown between May and July depending on the crop. Smaller, fast-growing vegetables can be sown as late as August to provide salad greens in the winter. With the increasing cost of food, it is more valuable than ever to make use of every bit of growing space—especially for this time of year when fresh vegetable prices are highest. This is the easiest gardening season because you are mainly just harvesting and don't have to worry about irrigation or controlling insect pests (though slugs are still romping around). So print out this small planting chart on my home page <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/pdf/Linda%20Gilkeson%20Planting%20Schedule.pdf> and keep it handy to remind you of key planting dates for crops that can overwinter in coastal gardens.

Order seeds: This is the time of year to go through your collection of garden seeds to see what you need for this year's garden, taking into account what varieties did best (and worst), what your family liked to eat, crops you wanted more of, new crops or varieties to try. Seed companies are already shipping orders and it is always a good idea to order sooner rather than later to ensure the varieties you want are in stock. There are always seeds at local garden centres, too, of course, and in a few weeks the season of Seedy Saturdays begins, where you can also buy seeds from local seed suppliers that attend these events. You can also participate in seed swaps and most events also schedule talks and workshops. If you find that your seed collection is in disarray, you don't know what varieties you grew or your records aren't as good as you would have liked, perhaps another gardener's resolution for this year would be to resolve to keep better planting records!

Seedy Saturdays are coming: To find out where and when there is an event near your, check this list of coastal BC events in 2025 kept by Farm Folk/City Folk: <https://farmfolkcityfolk.ca/find-seeds/community-seedy-saturdays-sundays/> The ones coming up first are:

Jan. 25: Denman Island: <https://farmfolkcityfolk.ca/seedy-events/denman-island-seedy-saturday/>

Feb. 1: Qualicum Beach [www.qbseedysaturday.ca](http://www.qbseedysaturday.ca)

Feb 8: Alberni Valley (Port

Alberni): <https://www.facebook.com/share/15j6GurVuT/?mibextid=LQQJ4d>

Saanich: <https://farmfolkcityfolk.ca/seedy-events/saanich-seedy-saturday-2/>

Feb. 15: Victoria: [victoriaseedysunday@gmail.com](mailto:victoriaseedysunday@gmail.com)

Feb. 22: Salt Spring Island: <https://www.facebook.com/events/3268192960152542?ref=newsfeed>

March 2: Nanaimo (Sunday) <https://www.facebook.com/share/1BLZ4vnnyy/>

Also coming up in March: Squamish, Cobble Hill, Duncan, Sooke, Coombs

ABCs of Gardening Series: Beginning gardeners and new subscribers might want to review the basic information included in these sections in my newsletters from December 21, 2023 to June 2024.

Topics covered over the 8 months: Designing beds, compost, lime and other soil amendments, irrigation, weeding, mulching. See the archive of these emails:

[http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html)

Note: My 2 online Year Round Harvest courses have both been filled for 2025—I am still working off the wait list, going through names in order that I received your emails in 2022.