

Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

November 13, 2025

Last Tasks; Try Late Sowing; ABCs of Gardening

With the mild weather this fall, hardy vegetables have continued to do a little more growing—a good thing too, as a couple of my cabbages were rather small (now a much better size) and I missed pinching out the tip of one of my Brussels sprouts plants in early September. When I noticed this in early October and snapped off the growing tip, the plant had not even started forming sprouts, although the plants pruned in September all had full-sized sprouts by then. With the warmish month we have just had, the late-pruned plant now has small sprouts, so there is hope for a crop yet. If you don't see little sprouts on your plants now, though, it is likely they won't make them at all—but don't get rid of the plants. Brussels sprouts plants produce tasty shoots all along the stem in the spring (somewhat like rapini or sprouting broccoli). They do this whether the plants grew proper sprouts or not, so there is still a crop to be had in the spring if you didn't plant early enough. Just make a note for next spring to seed Brussels sprouts by the end of May or transplant seedlings by the end of June to make sure plants have enough growing time to produce a crop before winter. Also, if you have disappointingly small plants of lettuce, chard, spinach or other leafy greens right now, don't discard them. Mulch around them to keep the soil from freezing and see what happens—they often survive to produce a very good crop early in the spring.

If you haven't collected enough leaves for mulch there are still lots around to rake up and take home. I haven't quite finished mulching my garden yet and I haven't been in a hurry as there doesn't seem to be cold weather in the immediate forecast—but keep a sharp eye on weather forecasts these days as cold spells could happen any time.

And for those that still haven't plant garlic: get it done asap! It is now too wet to handle garden soil or dig in compost before planting so plant where the soil is already fertile. For example, an excellent spot would be where beans or peas grew this year, because the legume roots will have enriched the soil. Poke a hole in the soil just wide and deep enough to slip a garlic clove down to the right depth; press the soil closed to cover the tip of the clove. Mulch the garlic bed with a thick layer of leaves, straw or other organic material. In late March/early April, rake back what is left of the winter mulch and spread a generous layer of good compost on the soil surface (at least an inch deep) to make up for not incorporating compost before planting. If you don't think the soil was fertile enough, sprinkle a complete organic fertilizer on the soil before spreading the compost in the spring. Move the mulch back onto the bed around the plants to cover the compost. Rainfall, earthworms, beneficial fungi and other soil organisms will move the nutrients down to the garlic roots.



If you want to experiment with late vegetable sowing, at the end of November scatter a generous sprinkling of lettuce, spinach, dill, cilantro, radish seeds over beds with good soil and press the seeds into the soil. Other seeds might work well too. That timing should be late enough that seeds won't germinate until early spring, though with the variable weather these days, who knows? [if it continues relatively warm to the end

of November, sow seeds in December]. Protect the seed beds with chickenwire, hardware cloth or other covers to stop birds from scratching up the seeds—and remember to be on top of slug control starting in February or March as seeds are germinating.

Protect seeds from birds→

Organize winter covers: If you haven't done so, plan how you will protect vegetables during a cold snap this winter. Thick mulches are all that is needed to keep root crops in the soil safe from freezing, but if it dips below -5oC (23oF), then

lettuce and leafy greens should be covered with a tarp to prevent frost damage. If the forecast sounds like lows will drop to -8 or -9oC (16oF), then winter broccoli and cauliflower should be covered as well. Stockpile lightweight tarps (they don't have to be transparent) or plastic sheets somewhere handy and collect a few bricks, rocks or heavy pieces of wood to hold the edges of the covers down during the high winds that often accompany a cold snap. Another approach is to cover beds with sturdy, wind-resistant tunnels or coldframes, which can be done any time now and left in place for the winter.



Protect citrus: If you have a citrus tree planted outdoors, it is time to install winter protection, whether you are using plumbing heat cables or incandescent Christmas lights to keep trees above freezing under a wrap of clear plastic or floating row cover. If your citrus trees are in pots, move them into an unheated greenhouse, sunporch or to another protected spot. For details see my archived November 22, 2022 message.

Resource Especially for New Gardeners

ABCs of Gardening New gardeners might want to review the basic information included in these sections in my newsletters from December 21, 2023 to June 2024 in the archive of my emails:

http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html Topics covered over the 8 months: Making a new garden bed (start now!), pros and cons of raised beds, compost, soil acidity and liming, using other soil amendments, irrigation, weeding, mulching.