

# Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

September 15, 2010

## Diseases (again), apple trees, gardening workshops

What a year for diseases!

**Managing onion family diseases this winter:** For the first time I saw downy mildew disease on leaves of late onions this year. It appears as a layer of purplish spores in the early morning over the surface of the onion leaves. The spores float off to infect other onion family plants as soon as the leaves dry off in the morning. This fungus, as well as the garlic/onion rust fungus that spread widely this year, overwinters on onion family plants in the garden. If you saw either of these diseases in your garden and are growing leeks, garlic or perennial onions this year, note that these plants provide an overwintering site for both disease fungi. This is of extreme concern in gardens where rust appeared on leeks, because the leeks provide the overwintering 'bridge' for the fungus: that means it will be around to attack garlic and next year's leek/onion seedlings very early. Given how easily rust spores move around on the wind, one overwintered patch of leeks with rust can infect a broad region. I am recommending that you remove all infected leeks from the garden well before any garlic leaves poke up above the soil from this fall's planting (leeks keep for up to 2 months in the refrigerator). Also, check any perennial onions if you have them and remove them entirely if they show signs of infections. Infected leaves can be composted because both of these diseases survive on living plant tissue.

**A note on tomato diseases:** Tomatoes in the region have been suffering from blossom end rot and from late blight. How to tell them apart:

-Blossom end rot shows up on the fruit only, with a black or tan spot at the blossom end of the fruit. The discoloured area grows and can take up half the fruit, especially on paste tomatoes. Later, the fruit rots starting from this damaged area. This is caused by a calcium deficiency in the plant, which may be due to a lack of calcium in the soil, but is usually caused by irregular watering in the summer that makes it hard for the plant to move calcium through its tissues.

-Late blight infections show up on the foliage first, from the margins of the leaves. The plant rapidly collapses and the whole plant rots. Oddly, the fruit often look OK for some time after the infection starts and some people report that fruit picked at the first sign of leaf infection are still edible. If it is late blight, dispose of the plants (bury them 18 inches deep or bag and dispose in the garbage). Potatoes are resistant but not immune to late blight so if it was in your tomatoes this year, it could overwinter in volunteer potatoes. Do a very careful job of digging your spuds this year and don't leave any little potatoes in the soil.

**ABC's of Gardening: Accessible, Basic & Cheap!** All of you Salt Spring gardeners could help us spread the word to friends that might be interested in starting a food garden.

I am giving three community workshops for anyone interested in learning more about growing their own food, sponsored by Transition Salt Spring. If we can get 50 or more registrants, Transition Salt Spring will cover the print costs so everyone can have a copy of my Year Around Harvest gardening manual. Admission by donation (suggested \$5/session). Location: Foxglove Farm and Garden Supply, Atkins Rd. at Lower Ganges Rd. is donating the space; the location is on the BC Transit bus route and close to Ganges.

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## **Diseases (again), apple trees, gardening workshops**

**Session A: October 30, 2-4 pm:** What to do now to get ready for your food garden: where to put your garden, the timing of liming, how to break new ground the easy way (avoid backbreaking work next spring), compost basics; mulches.

**Session B; Jan. 15, 2011 2-4 pm:** Planning your garden and preparing the soil.

**Session C: January 29, 2011 2-4 pm:** Growing tips for favourite crops:

To sign up, contact Marion Pape: [marionpape@telus.net](mailto:marionpape@telus.net) or come to the Transition Salt Spring booth at the Fall Fair this weekend to sign up.

### **Heritage Fruit Trees from Bree's Trees:**

Bree Eagle has a wonderful orchard of hundreds of heritage trees on Salt Spring. This list shows varieties she has already grafted and should have in stock for planting this fall. She has many other varieties that can be custom ordered for grafting onto your choice of rootstock in the spring. Contact her for particulars at: 250-537-4319 [beagle@saltspring.com](mailto:beagle@saltspring.com)

Cider Apples: Bortlinger Weinapfel, Bulmers Norman, Crimson King, Geeveston Fanny, Improved Redstreak, Muscadet de Dieppe, Sauergraeuch, Stenbridge Cluster, Taylor's.

Cooking Apples: Alexander, Golden Noble, McPhee's Greening

Early Dessert Apples: Astrachan Red

Mid-Season Dessert Apples: Akane, Pippin, Golden Precose, Goldgelb, Gravenstein Yellow, Holstein, Jonagold, Jupiter, Kandil Sinap, Kidd's Orange Red, King, Laxton's Superb, Maiden's Blush, Merton Worcester, Mrs. Philmore, Pink Pearl, Prima, RubINETTE, Sir Prize- Snow (Fameuse)- Suntan, Sweet Sixteen

Late Dessert Apples.: Arkansas Black, Ashmead's Kernel, Baldwin, Belle de Boskoop, Duke of Devonshire, Esopus Spitzenburg, Freyberg,

Gala, Grimes Golden, Honey Gold, Kinsei, Lady, Malling Kent, May's Apple, Spartan, Yellow Bellflower, Yellow Newton Pippin

Russet Apples: Brownlee's Russet, Egremont Russet, Knobbed Russet, Orlean's Reinette, Pomme Gris, Royal Russet, St. Edmond Pippin, Swayzie

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If you thought I was missing in action for a few weeks, you are right-- I was finishing a manuscript for my new gardening book--now that it is off to the publisher I am trying to catch up with everything, including the garden. More about that later!

For info on my books or to check my (now updated) schedule for talks and presentations in your area see: [www.lindagilkeson.ca](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca)

You can read all of my previous messages on the Salt Spring Energy Strategy website:

[www.saltspringenergystrategy.org](http://www.saltspringenergystrategy.org)