

# Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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## Backyard Bounty starts now

My new book, a labour of love over the last year, is out! It contains pretty much all I know about gardening in this region:

***Backyard Bounty: The Complete Guide to Year-Round Organic Gardening in the Pacific Northwest.***  
New Society Publishers. ISBN: 9780865716841.

You can buy copies from me directly (see my speaking schedule on my web site) and Salt Springers can get one from me whenever you see me around the island. You can also mail order it from me, get it at your local bookstore or directly from the publisher: <http://www.newsociety.com/bookid/4089>

Note, that the cover photo is an actual harvest from my garden....

### Now, onto the gardening:

This cold, late season isn't very encouraging for anyone wanting to put in early peas and potatoes. If you just have to plant something or go crazy, I suggest you set the seed potatoes for your early potato crop along a sunny windowsill to develop nice sturdy sprouts for the next week or two. This is great for whole seed potatoes, but cut seed pieces of potatoes will dry up too much if left more than a couple of days.

And pre-sprout some peas indoors on a windowsill in a tray of vermiculite for a couple of weeks. These should be ready to set out by the end of the month (when the weather surely will be warmer, she said, hopefully....). The best germination temperature for peas is actually 24oC, believe it or not. Though they can germinate at temperatures as low as 4oC, it takes much longer and all the while they will be vulnerable to pests and disease, which is why I like to start my first batch of peas indoors. I jam about 30 pea seeds into a 1-litre milk carton filled with vermiculite (lay the container on it's side and cut out the top side to make a big container); be sure to punch some drain holes in the bottom. The seeds have enough food in the seed to sustain the seedlings for 10-14 days, then they can go out to the garden.

Seeding indoors: There is still time to started leeks and onions from seed if you haven't done this already. Some keeners will have already started tomatoes, but if you have, be prepared to keep moving them on to larger pots before the roots get crowded as it might be a fairly late spring. If your tomatoes (and peppers and eggplants) are going to be planted in a greenhouse for the season, now is a fine time to start them.

Strawberry plants will soon be in nurseries and benefit from early planting as do any fruit trees and bushes. I hope you are finished pruning fruit trees by now. Pruning in March is fine for grape vines as they can be pruned later than other fruit (they leaf out later too).

Spring will come March 20th, never fear!

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For info on my books or to check my 2011 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)