

Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

June 24, 2012

Good heavens! Carrot Day is nearly here

Yes, the first week of July is great timing to sow carrots for your winter harvest. It is a tradition at my house to mark the July 1st holiday by sowing the final planting of carrots, beets, rutabaga, daikon. This timing allows the roots to mature fully before winter without becoming too large. For gardeners in the warmest parts of the Lower Mainland or down into Washington, you could plant a little later--say to July 15th--but don't leave it later. July is prime growing time and missing a week of July can't be made up in the shorter, cooler days of fall. If you like carrots, beets, etc., you will likely want to sow a much bigger bed for the winter crop than you had in for summer because you are planting for at least 6 months of harvest. Just a caution: Every year my garden notes read "plant more carrots next year"

For white turnips, which grow quite quickly, you can sow until the end of July if you like them as small roots.

Don't forget to cover the seedbeds of carrots, rutabaga and daikon with floating row cover before the sprouts show. This prevents adult root flies from laying eggs on the plants (which hatch into maggots that ruin the roots). For more detailed info on seeding methods and covering these crops, see my June 24th note from last year: <http://www.saltspringenergystrategy.org/food.htm>

Misc other notes:

I had a huge influx of new subscribers this month so if this is your first Linda's List, you might want to see my May 30 message which had information on things to plant this summer:

<http://www.saltspringenergystrategy.org/food.htm>

Peas: I always put in a last planting peas the last week of June so just seeded some today. These are the ones I count on eating from August to October. For planting this late, it is a good idea to choose varieties listed as resistant to pea enation mosaic virus because aphids commonly spread this virus in mid-summer. People with the warmest gardens in summer might not find such late peas do well, but give it a try if you can find a spot with a bit of shade to protect them from the hot afternoon sun.

Purple sprouting broccoli and winter cauliflower: Unless you are planning to buy plants later this summer, seed them now.

Sweet potatoes (AKA "yams"): For Salt Spring gardeners, Foxglove nursery just brought in nice, well-grown "Georgia Jet" plants. The plants came from Brian Minter so gardeners in the Lower Mainland might find these plants in a local nursery that gets stock from him. Grow them in the hottest, sunniest spot you have; I have the best results growing them in big black plastic tubs (1 per tub), set against a house foundation where the sun shines directly on the pots to heat the roots.

Fruit trees: The June drop (when trees naturally drop some of fruit) is over even in the cooler and higher elevation areas of the coast so it is time to thin the fruit if necessary. With some dry May weather this year, you might have more fruit set on trees than usual. I know picking off fruit goes against the grain, but you really are not reducing the crop because the remaining fruit will be bigger. Some guidelines: Apples & pears: thin to one or two fruit per cluster (1 if every cluster has fruit; 2 if some clusters do and some don't have fruit or if the tree is mature and vigorous). Plums: thin so that fruit won't be touching when it reaches mature size so about 6-8 cm (3 inches) apart. For people in the worst of the tent caterpillar onslaught this year, if you weren't able to defend your apples and they were

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largely defoliated, pull off the fruit as the trees will need their energy to grow more leaves. If the caterpillars have tattered leaves at the tips of the branches, but most lower leaves are intact, then the trees should be OK carrying a normal crop.

Garden Resources: Check out the new 'Fall & Winter Gardening Guide" from West Coast Seeds-- available at a nursery near you or from WCS or online:

<http://www.westcoastseeds.com/gardenresources/> Great info!

For info on my books or to check my 2012 & 2013 schedule for talks, workshops and gardening classes in your area see: www.lindagilkeson.ca

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