

Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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Winter Brassicas, carrot day and so much more

Well, here it is: Time to seed winter broccoli and cauliflower for harvest from February onward next year and shortly time to plant lots of other things too. To help you remember when to sow, I have posted my winter harvest planting [chart](#) on my home page (www.lindagilkeson.ca). It shows when to seed crops for harvests during the winter, in a format you can print out and post somewhere handy to act as a reminder (mine lives on my refrigerator door).

Broccoli: I continue to be very impressed with 'Red Arrow' purple sprouting broccoli. While not the earliest (that's Rudolph Early) or the one with the biggest central heads (that's Cardinal Late), it is a very long producer of many side shoots. In fact, I just today consigned my plants to the chicken yard since it is time to start picking summer broccoli. Red Arrow side shoots do become quite small by this time of year, but are numerous and continue to be tender and tasty. Incidentally, the generic 'Purple Sprouting Broccoli' listed in the West Coast Seeds catalogue is actually 'Red Arrow'. Rudolph is indeed very early, but doesn't continue producing side shoots for very long. 'White Star' is an overwintering broccoli with white shoots--like tiny cauliflower. I haven't grown it for years, but am giving it another try this year to see if I like it better than last time (hope springs eternal...).

Cauliflower: Unless you order from UK seed houses or US heritage seed suppliers, you probably won't have much selection this year for winter cauliflower. Luckily 'Galleon', which is still available, is a top quality, very large white cauliflower that heads up in April. If you can, also try to get 'Purple Cape', which is a very reliable purple cauliflower. For US readers, Territorial Seed is selling an 'overwintering to spring harvest blend'. Useful for people with large gardens who might plant a quite a few seeds, but those with small gardens may not luck into a good balance of early and late cultivars if growing just a few.

Carrot Day: Long time readers of these messages will know that July 1st is Carrot Day at my house--the date I sow the big bed of carrots for eating next winter (US readers might want to celebrate your own Carrot Day on the 4th of July). So along with fireworks and other events on our national holidays, it is great timing to remember to sow carrots, beets and rutabagas. It can be tricky getting a good stand of carrots in July, so sow plenty of seeds, make sure the soil never dries out and, if the weather is warm, shade the beds (newspaper, burlap, upside down seedling trays, etc.) to keep the soil cool. Early July temperatures are often too warm for good germination of carrot seeds, so I also sow a little deeper than usual too to get the seeds below the warmest top layer. This works in my sandy, loos soil, but wouldn't be a good idea for heavy clay soil.

Don't forget to cover the seedbeds of carrots and rutabaga with insect netting (knitted monofilament fabric, such as ProtekNet) or floating row cover before the seedlings sprouts show. This prevents adult root flies from laying eggs on the plants (which hatch into maggots that ruin the roots) For photos of pests and covers, see: http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/root_feeders.html#67 . Suppliers nearest to Salt Spring stocking this product are Dinter Nursery in Duncan and Russell Nursery on Wain Road, North Saanich. ProtekNet is also sold by William Dam Seeds (<http://www.damseeds.ca>) and is available wholesale (in 100 m rolls) from Dubois Agrinovation in Montreal (www.duboisag.com/ order the 60 gr mesh size). Get some other gardeners together and order a roll to divide up.

Other: The first week of July is also good timing to sow radicchio, various endives, kohlrabi and more kale and Swiss chard. Any spring sown kale and chard will stand right through the winter, but you might want to add more plants to what you have now to provide lots of leaves during mid-winter when plants are not growing.

And a last, unfortunate note: Garlic rust is rampant right now with many gardeners reporting infections. If your garlic has yellowing leaf tips and outer leaves with streaks of yellowing and drying tissue, however, that is normal for maturing plants. Here is what rust looks like:
<http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/foilage.html#151>

For colour photos of pests and diseases, info on buying my books, including the new edition of *Natural Insect, Weed & Disease Control*, or to see my upcoming schedule of workshops and gardening classes, see: www.lindagilkeson.ca