

Winter Gardening Newsletter
by Linda Gilkeson
Sept. 23, 2013
Rust flies, fruit flies and upcoming events

Yesterday's storm certainly felt like fall, but I do hope there will be some good warm days left in the season. Some notes for this time of year, in no particular order:

Insect covers: Don't take insect mesh or Remay covers off of plants that need protection from root flies yet. Numbers of carrot rust fly and cabbage root maggot adults are probably still high, given the long warm summer. They can be expected to continue to lay eggs on the shoulders of unprotected roots until the end of October or until the first heavy frost, whichever comes first. This becomes much less of a risk when it is cold and wet, but they can still come out in any warmer, dry weather this fall. If they do get the chance to lay eggs this late, the maggots will continue to damage roots all winter--so it is well worth leaving the covers in place for awhile.

Pinching sprouts: The end of September is a good time to pinch out or snip off the growing tip of Brussels sprout plants so the sprouts have time to plump up nicely through October. If your plants are tall, but the sprouts are only pea- or grape- sized right now, not to worry--but do pinch the tips. If your plants are short (under 0.5 m or 18 inches high) they are probably not big enough to develop sprouts this fall, but you can try to force the issue by pinching. BS plants are biennials, which means if sprouts don't develop before winter, they don't form in the spring because that's when the plant wants to send up seed stalks.

Fruit fly bad news: This year the dreaded spotted wing Drosophila spread to even more gardens in the region. BC Ministry of Agriculture monitoring has found them in commercial berry crops in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island for several years, but this is the first year (that I know of) finding them in Salt Spring gardens [more info and photos: <http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/swd.htm>] I started catching them in vinegar traps in early September and caught a lot this last week, but have received reports from mid-July onward of infestations in garden cherries, blueberries and other soft fruit from Victoria to Powell River. Do everything you can to pick and destroy any fruit you are not going to use that is still on plants, such as late plums and strawberries. Fruit with soft spots, indicating SWD infestation, can still be used if you cut out the soft material; since that is where the maggots are, that material should be destroyed or put in the garbage or treated to kill the maggots before composting. I keep a container in my freezer to collect the mucky bits cut from strawberries--after a few days I dump the material in the compost. Managing this little pest will not be fun--SO, start bugging your local garden centre to get the proper insect mesh materials in stock for next year! For more info see my Feb. 1, 2013 note: http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html

Upcoming Events:

Victoria: Tuesday, Oct. 1st. 7:30 pm. I will be joining Rachel Fisher, Heather Stretch, and Robin Tunnicliffe, authors of *All the Dirt* at Russell Books (734 Fort St.) for what is being billed as "a lively discussion on organic gardening". Do come along! For a nifty promotion poster and more info see: <http://us5.campaign-archive2.com/?u=096d7aecbd6f5ad8281e1c950&id=b7c1201dc1&e=41a59c206a>

Reserve your spot for 2014 Year Round Harvest courses: Classes are filling fast for my 10-month gardening courses, with one Horticulture Centre of the Pacific class already full and the Salt Spring class with only 7 spots left.

If you are interested in the HCP classes, do contact them immediately to get on the list. We will schedule a second course if there is enough interest. Classes are held on one Sunday afternoon each month, from January to October. For more info on topics, dates and to register see: <http://hcp.ca/commed-year-round-harvest>

For the Salt Spring class, just send an email to me. Classes run on a Thursday evening once a month January to October. I will be happy to send you information on dates and topics, costs, etc.

NEW: You can now use PayPal to buy mail order books by credit card through my web site. I do like cheques, given the fees PayPal charges, but of course, certainly appreciate receiving orders via the online payment system, too.

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

You can read all of my previous messages archives on my web site under the Gardening Tips page or on the Salt Spring Energy Strategy website: www.saltspringenergystrategy.org