

# Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

July 31, 2014 J

## Seeding, Trapping, Planning--No Rest for the Gardener

What to sow right now: The first week of August is the last planting window for seeding hardy leafy greens, such as kale, Swiss chard, leaf beet (AKA perpetual spinach, a type of chard with a finer stem), collards, Chinese cabbage and other Asian greens, mustard spinach (Komatsuna), mustard greens, leaf radish, leaf turnip (Mizuna or Namenia). Kale and chard planted earlier will continue right through the winter, but you might want to start more plants of your favourites to allow for the fact that leaves don't grow back in the winter months. I figure I need about 5 times more kale, chard, and other greens for winter than I allow for summer harvest. While this is the week to start these crops from seed, you can certainly transplant starts from nurseries later in August, if you can find plants to buy.

This week is also the last time to seed for a decent harvest of beets, winter radishes or white turnips. If you are sowing this week, be right on top of thinning and watering to make sure plants grow as fast as possible from now on. (Don't forget to shade the seedbeds until the first shoots show--these days the top layer of soil is way too hot and dries out too quickly to get a good stand of seedlings).

Where to find space can be a problem: Look for gaps, perhaps where peas or onions have just finished or even where a single cauliflower or corn stalk has been harvested. Don't plant cabbage family (Brassicacae) plants in the same place where other plants in the same family just came out, but crop rotation is not important for lettuce, endive, Swiss chard, spinach or beets so you can stick them in anywhere you can find a little space.

If you didn't sow purple sprouting broccoli, winter cauliflower and winter cabbage earlier this summer, you may still be able to find starts to set out. Feed and water them really well so they catch up.

On Salt Spring, Chorus Frog Farm stand on Rainbow Road has winter veggie starts: 4 kinds of kale, collards, kohlrabi, cauliflower, purple sprouting broccoli, Swiss chard and beets as well summer lettuce and green heading broccoli (for fall harvest). Winter onions will be available later on. (A plus! They are offering free sweet alyssum plants to customers who purchase cabbage family plants to help attract native aphid predators to your garden). Foxglove garden nursery will have a good selection of starts available in mid-August. In other areas, try local nurseries and farmer's markets, but beware of suppliers (especially grocery stores) selling summer varieties of cauliflower and broccoli, which are a guaranteed disappointment. On the other hand, any variety of kale, chard and leafy greens should be OK for winter as long as they are frost hardy.

Spinach Day: To go with our July 1st Carrot Day, I think we need Spinach Day, which I am going to declare on August 7th at my house. Over the years I have found this is THE perfect timing to sow spinach for harvest from fall right through next spring. Despite being tattered by winter's misfortunes, in March the overwintered plants put on a burst of new leaves for a really big spring harvest. At this northern latitude, spinach sown in the spring always goes to seed in the long days of June. Sowing in July is particularly futile: between the long days and warm temperatures, the tiny plants start flowering as soon as they come up. But wait until the first week of August and the noticeably shorter days don't stimulate flowering; even if it is hot, hardly any of the little plants bolt. If you can manage it, the best place for spinach is where it is protected from winter rain and occasional snow. Near a building foundation, under the overhang of a roof, is ideal, as are beds you will cover with a cold frame or plastic tunnel later on. I have tried various spinach varieties over the years and they all seem to perform similarly, though I have to say the old variety 'Longstanding Bloomsdale' is still my favourite for productivity.

SWD traps: Numbers of spotted wing Drosophila, that nasty little introduced fruit fly (see: <http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/swd.htm#management>), are beginning to rise rapidly in provincial monitoring counts in coastal berry fields (see: <http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/swd-trapresults.pdf>). Last year, numbers were very high in local gardens in August. If you have blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, cherries and other soft fruit that has not yet ripened, you might want to put out a trap to monitor their numbers so you have early warning of an infestation.

How to make a trap: Take a plastic container with a lid--a 1/2 litre (pint) cottage cheese or deli container is ideal-- and punch 4 or 5 small holes around the rim. Holes made by a paper punch (remember those?) are a good size, but you can cut small square holes that size too. Pour 2 cm (up to an inch) of apple cider vinegar into the container, put on the lid and set it out near your fruit. The traps are not effective as a control so you just need 1 trap to tell you what is going on. You can tell the spotted wing Drosophila from other drowned fruit flies by the single spot on each wing. They are actually quite easy to see floating in the vinegar. The males are the ones with the spots so if you see them, you can assume the females are laying eggs somewhere.

If, or when, you see a male in the trap, that's a signal to cover your trees or bushes with insect netting, if you have it. Or to spray, but options are limited for organic home gardeners, pyrethrins being the only readily available insecticide in BC (commercial organic growers also can use spinosad). For more on insect netting, see my Feb. 1, 2013 note: [http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html) . Regardless of what action you take this year, if any, write down the date you start catching SWD in your garden notes. Next year, if you are going to cover fruit bushes and small trees with netting, do it well before the date you found flies this year.

Plan Now for Next Year's Fruit: Fruit Trees & More, near Victoria, is taking orders of bare root fruit trees for next spring. They list a wide selection of dwarf fruit trees, including "mini-dwarf" apples; also hardy almonds. If you are interested in figs, citrus and other interesting fruit that can be grown on the coast do get on their mailing list for these. If you want to receive their fruit tree list and ordering information, contact: Fruit Trees and More (Bob and Verna Duncan), Email: [bvduncan@FruitTreesAndMore.com](mailto:bvduncan@FruitTreesAndMore.com); Phone 250-656-4269; Address: 724 Wain Rd., North Saanich, BC V8L 5N8. I can certainly attest to the quality of their trees as everything I purchased from them is growing beautifully. I strongly advise planting dwarf trees in home gardens, both for easy management and to make it possible to deal with fruit pests such as the SWD.

Bee Note: If you have nest boxes or tubes for Blue Orchard Bees (AKA Mason Bees) you might want to put them away in a garden shed or unheated garage. The mother bees die off in May so only the developing immature bees are inside the nests. I always put my nest blocks in the garage around July 1 to keep birds and parasitic wasps from attacking them over the rest of the season. A dedicated flicker or other birds can clean out a lot of baby bees in no time and at least one gardener I know of this year suffered a complete loss of her bees to birdies.

### **Upcoming Events**

Richmond: Saturday, August 23: The last *Storing and Preserving Fruit & Vegetables* workshops I am giving in 2014. 3 workshops--9:30-11:00 Storing Fresh Food; 11:30-1:00 Simple food preservation; 1:30-3:00: Advanced food preservation. Held at the Hamilton Community Centre. Classes are free but pre-registration is required: <http://www.richmond.ca/parksrec/about/registration.htm>

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See my web site <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca> for hundreds of colour photos of pests and diseases to help you ID problems, to order books or check my 2014 schedule for talks, workshops and gardening classes in your area. I am totally booked for 2014 and 2015 is filling fast so if you are interested in a workshop next year let me know soon.

My previous messages are archived on my web site under the *Gardening Tips* page: [http://lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html)