

# Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

September 3, 2016

## Last Planting, Fall Weather Reminders, Keep on Trapping

The seeding season is about over: Only the smallest leafy greens (corn salad, lettuce, arugula) can be sown this week and still have a chance of making a good crop this fall. If you want more kale, chard, spinach or Chinese cabbage, look for well-grown starts at local nurseries. These still have enough time to produce a usable harvest for this fall and winter (but do get them planted as soon as possible). The wet weather this week provides a good opportunity to transplant seedlings you started earlier. I have a bed of leafy greens and lettuce that should be thinned so I will transplant some of the plants into an empty bed vacated [finally!] by the last of my onions.

Splitters: With this wet weather, watch out for splitting fruit and vegetables. I found an exploded zucchini this morning, cracked from one end to the other. This happens when plants have been kept rather short on water as many gardens are on the coast during the dry season. With the arrival of substantial rainfall they take up water inside faster than the skin can grow, so the fruit or root splits. Split carrots and other roots remain edible though ugly and you don't have to dig them early, but split fruit has to be picked. In particular, watch late plums right now and pick them immediately if they are splitting. Split fruit quickly starts to rot and becomes a big draw for wasps attracted to the sweet juice. If you need to process plums quickly, they are excellent dehydrated; they can also be frozen now and dealt with later to make juice or jam.

With the onset of fall rains, maturing cabbage heads can take up water too fast and can also split. If that happens, use the cabbage immediately as it will soon rot. You can prevent splitting by cutting or disrupting some of the roots: Grip each head and give it enough of a yank or twist to break some roots (but don't pull it out) OR use a shovel to slice down on two opposite sides of each plant to cut some roots, while leaving others intact.

Start staking top heavy plants: Fall wind storms can arrive any time and take their toll on tall and top heavy plants that spend the winter in the garden. Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale are most in need of support to prevent stems from being broken or plants uprooted. Use tomato cages or drive in 3 or 4 stakes around the stem of each plant. Also, I am repeating myself, but be especially alert right now to bracing branches of apple trees heavy with fruit as this is when they can be most damaged by high wind.

Keep trapping SWDs: Recommendations for managing spotted wing Drosophila, the little fly that left those tiny white maggots in berries, cherries and other fruit this summer, continue to change in light of experience. Some experts are now recommending that you put out up to 3 traps (how to make the traps is described in my June 14<sup>th</sup> message [http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html)) and keep them in place long past when there is attractive fruit available. The objective is to mop up as many adults as possible before they find a sheltered place to overwinter. Last year I caught huge numbers of flies daily right up until the end of September and then numbers dropped off rapidly. I plan to keep my traps out until the end of October this year in hopes of depleting the overwintering SWD numbers.

Powdery mildew redux: As always, this time of year we see a lot of white powdery patches and spots on leaves of squash family and other plants. Up until the rainy weather this week, we had perfect weather for powdery mildews to germinate and spread. These fungi germinate in humid weather, particularly when days are warm and nights are cool, but the fungi can't grow when there is water on the leaves. These fungi attack the oldest leaves and least vigorous plants first. Keeping squash growing vigorously with liquid fertilizer, if necessary, and lots of irrigation water, helps keep powdery mildew at bay during the growing season. By now, though, some gardeners have squash plants with little or no green leaves left and they often ask whether you can compost the leaves. Yes, you can. And don't be in a rush to pick off damaged leaves as this won't control the disease. If leaves are green under the white blotches the leaves are still feeding the plant. When leaves turn brown or when the whole plant is finished, you can safely compost the material, even in a cool compost pile.

**My upcoming events:**

Year Round Harvest 2017: Registration is now open for my 10-month gardening course at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific. You can read about the course, including dates and topics, cost and how to register at: <http://hcp.ca/year-round-harvest/> The class sells out so it isn't too early to get on the list of interested participants.

**City of Richmond workshops:**

Saturday, Sept. 17: 9:30-11:00 Resilient Landscapes and Food Gardens for a Changing Climate; 11:30-1:00 Get Ready for Winter – Troubleshooting for Next Year; 1:30-3:00 Fall Lawn Care and European Chafer Management.  
Saturday, Sept. 24 10-12:00 Preserving Fruits and Vegetables; 12:30-2:30 Fresh Storage and Easy Freezing  
All of the above workshops will be at the Thompson Community Centre, 5151 Granville Avenue, Richmond, BC. Workshops are free but you must pre-register: [www.richmond.ca/register](http://www.richmond.ca/register)

**Other's events:**

For Salt Spring gardeners: Saturday Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> is the last day to drop off your entry form at Foxglove nursery (Atkins Rd.) for the Fall Fair, held Sept. 17-18<sup>th</sup> this year. Why not try your hand at entering some of your fruit, vegetables and flowers? Everyone enjoys seeing the beautiful variety of crops and flowers entered—as well as the quilts, baking, eggs, preserves, art, weaving, photography, bunnies, poultry and other livestock. Off-islanders are most welcome! See: <http://ssifi.org/fall-fair>

For everyone: Saturday, January 28, 2017. "Our Gardens of the Future" is a daylong event sponsored by the Victoria Master Gardeners Association and featuring speakers, vendors, an auction and delicious food. Everyone is welcome! Mary Winspear Centre, 2243 Beacon Avenue, Sidney, BC. For more information and to register see: <http://mgabc.org/content/15-mixing-it-biennial-conference> I am letting you know now because there is a lower rate for registration before Oct. 31.

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My speaking schedule for the rest of 2016 and all of 2017 is fully booked. Check the calendar on my web site <http://lindagilkeson.ca/> for talks and workshops in your area, also for book sales (including my newest: *Resilient Gardens 2016: Climate Change, Stress Disorders, Pest Update*). There are also hundreds of colour photos of pests, diseases and disorders to help you identify problems.