

# Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

June 16, 2025

## Winter Crops to Sow Now

Some of your plants may be showing sunscald damage on the leaves from the very hot weather 10 days ago. It takes awhile for injury to show up, usually appearing as dry, biscuit-coloured or dark brown areas on leaves, especially around the edges of leaves and between leaf veins. Damaged areas won't recover, but established plants will put out new leaves and should be fine. Small seedlings that got too hot, however, may have damaged roots and are best replaced if they seem to have stopped growing. There is time to start most crops again from seed and nurseries may still have some starts for sale. If you sowed carrots, lettuce or other seeds before the heat wave and nothing has come up by now, sow again, as the seeds were probably killed.



*Heat injury on young cucumber plant.*

What to sow now for winter to spring harvests: The following notes are for gardeners growing their own starts, but you can also buy plants later on from people growing the 'right stuff', such as Chorus Frog Nursery on Salt Spring and from the Victoria Compost Education Centre sale, August 13-16. Please let me know about other sources in your area for winter vegetable starts and I will list them in my next message.

Brassicas: From now until to the end of this month is good timing to sow seeds of winter broccoli and winter cauliflower, also varieties of cabbages that take 85-90 days to mature (check the seed description for days-to-harvest information). Hardy, overwintering broccoli and cauliflower are biennials that are sown in late June for harvest starting next March. They are hardier than summer (annual) varieties and because they are biennials, the cold chill of winter is what stimulates them to produce heads in the spring. The winter broccoli continues making shoots all spring; I only just finished harvesting winter broccoli in mid-May, so only had a short broccoli gap before my summer broccoli harvest started last week.

While there are many varieties of hardy cabbage to choose from, winter broccoli and cauliflower varieties are hard to find as seed companies drop them from their listings. Overwintering biennial broccolis are mostly purple sprouting varieties, but there are also summer purple sprouting broccoli varieties for sale. Carefully read seed descriptions to make sure you are buying a hardy winter/overwintering type; if days-to-harvest is listed, it will typically be over 200 days.

As of this week, websites for these BC seed companies still list the following (some other BC seed companies carry winter Brassicas, but their websites show they are currently sold out):

BC Eco-Seed Co-op: 'Winter Wonder Purple' and 'Purple Sprouting' broccoli, 'Galleon' cauliflower

Salt Spring Seeds: 'Winter Wonder' and 'Red Spear' broccoli, 'Galleon' cauliflower

West Coast Seeds: 'Walcheren' cauliflower, no winter broccoli (note that they list 'Purple Sprouting' broccoli, but the description indicates it is a summer variety).



*Galleon winter cauliflower in April.*

If you are in the Victoria area you might find seeds from the BC suppliers listed above at the Wildwood Outdoor Living Centre [4660 Elk Lake Drive]. They are an area hub for seeds from many local and international seed companies and also sell online. They carry Fothergill's Seeds from England and you may find 'Aalsmeer' winter cauliflower from that source.

For US readers, none of the following list winter cauliflower, but they do have winter broccoli:

Territorial Seed: 'Rudolph' and 'Purple Sprouting' broccoli

Osborne Seed: 'Red Fire', 'Bonarda', 'Mendocino' broccoli

Saltwater Seeds: 'Purple Reign' broccoli

Although it is warm enough to plant seeds directly in the garden, I find it works better for me to sow in seedling flats. Seeds germinate safely indoors away from slugs, pillbugs and other pests. The trays are set in the sun during the day (or in shade during heat waves) and brought indoors before dusk to avoid having root maggot flies lay eggs on the plants. When transplanting seedlings to the garden, don't forget to put the barrier around each stem to protect them from cabbage root maggot [described in detail in my May 23, 2025 message:

[http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html) ]. If you sow directly outdoors, cover the entire seed bed with insect netting or floating row cover to keep off root maggot flies until the seedlings are big enough to fit the individual barriers around the stem.

Root crops: As long-time readers know, Carrot Day is rapidly approaching: July 1st is my target date for sowing a big bed of carrots for harvesting fall through winter. My Canada Day celebrations wouldn't be the same without spending some happy moments sowing carrots!

Because carrots stay out in the garden all winter (well mulched) they are protected from extreme cold so any variety is hardy enough to survive winter. The first week of July is really a cut-off date for carrots: you can sow earlier than that, but if sown later carrots just don't have time to reach full size before the end of October. If carrots are still very small in the fall, they won't get larger in the spring because they switch to producing seeds after wintering over.

Further south on the coast and where gardens are in wide open areas and receive dawn to dusk sunshine in September, you could get away with sowing a little later in July. But for gardens where fall days with the sun lower in the sky mean that shade from trees, buildings, mountains cut short the hours of full sun, you need to get carrot seeds into the ground the first week of July. Beets germinate and grow a little faster and can be successfully sown to mid-July as can winter radishes, such as daikon. As always, remember that soil can be too warm for carrot germination in the summer. In the summer months, shade seedbeds of carrots as well as other vegetables until you see tiny shoots emerge (shade also conserves water, while keeping the soil evenly moist for good germination).

Recycling Corner: Rather than rewriting information from previous newsletters, I refer you to timely notes in the archive on my website [http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening\\_tips.html](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html)

-See June 15, 2024: For a roundup on dealing with weeds: ABCs of Gardening: Weeding

-See June 28, 2024: For more on mulches: ABCs of Gardening: Mulches