Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

August 8, 2025

Last Sowing, Summer Pruning, Food Preserving Webinar

With spaces opening up in the garden where you harvested garlic or onions, or where spring-sown crops, such as lettuce, peas, cauliflower, have finished, you should be able to find a place to sow hardy leafy greens for winter eating. This includes Komatsuna, mizuna, leaf mustards, winter varieties of lettuce, Chinese cabbage, arugula and spinach. At my house, August 12 is Spinach Day--not too late to get a nice crop, but not so early that plants are likely to go to seed. Spinach is more sensitive to daylength than to heat so the long days of May and June send it into flower even in cool weather, while hot mid-August days usually don't because daylengths are much shorter. If you sow immediately, you can get decent sized winter radish/daikon, kale, rapini, broccoli raab before for winter, but if you can find starts of these and Swiss chard, that's even better. Don't be sucked into buying starts of winter cabbage or Brussels sprouts this late, however, as there isn't enough time for seedlings to produce a crop before October. Winter varieties of broccoli and cauliflower don't produce their heads until spring so planting small plants now is okay, but if they are quite small, make sure they are well fed, have plenty of water and are shaded in heat waves so nothing slows their growth. And remember, you don't have to wait until a bed is empty to start a new crop: just sow seeds anywhere there is a gap, such as where a cauliflower came out or a corn plant is harvested.

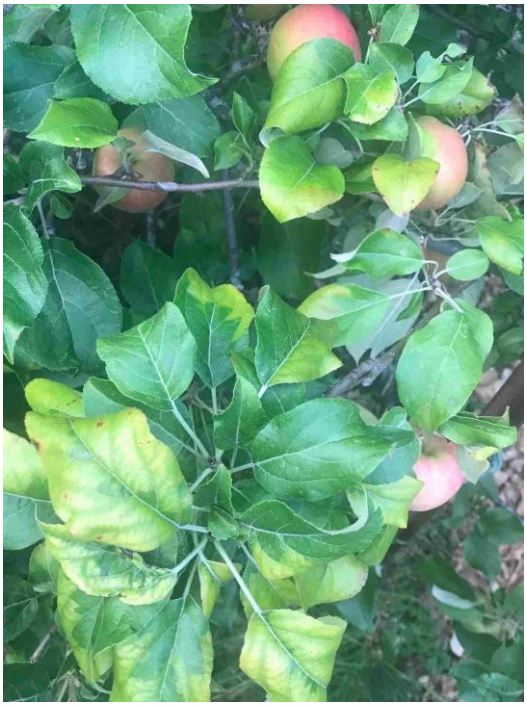
As we head into the last stretch of the growing season, this is a good time to edit the garden. Check that plants are still growing well and, if not, it might be time for a boost of liquid fertilizer watered in around the roots (e.g., commercial fish fertilizer or homemade "tea" made by soaking a shovel of compost or horse manure in a bucket of water overnight). Make sure carrots, beets and other roots are well thinned and weeded to maximize their growth rate. Look for plants that are not likely to produce anything this summer (I often—sadly—have to delete melon plants at this time of year). If you are growing winter squash, but don't have fruit fattening up on the plants now, there just isn't going to be enough time to mature squash that sets this late. This doesn't apply to summer squash and zucchini, which will continue setting usable fruit into September. Several people have asked if they should be topping tomatoes, but it's a bit early. A target date to remove the new flowers on vining/indeterminate tomatoes is usually around Sept. 1 (October 1 in a greenhouse) as fruit forming after this won't have time to develop.

This squash will have time to mature by fall.

Summer pruning: If you are going to do summer pruning on fruit trees, this is the time to do it. Pruning while trees are dormant in the winter stimulates summer growth, whereas summer pruning is useful to slow down trees that tend to put on a lot of new growth. Some peaches, plums and cherries really go crazy, producing 4-6 feet of new wood in the summer; such trees should just be

pruned in the summer and not stimulated by dormant pruning. Less rambunctious trees can be pruned in either, or both, seasons, but trees that are growing slowly would only be pruned in the winter. Summer pruning on apple and pear trees has another benefit as it causes some leaf buds to convert to flower buds so that next spring the tree has more fruit buds on branches. Cut back the new growth on branches by one-half to two-thirds by mid-August (there won't be fruit on that part of the branch).

While we are on apple trees: Here is a note for people with 'Honeycrisp' apple trees who might be puzzled by what looks like a nutrient deficiency. Leaves on part, or all, of the tree in some years have yellowish patches extending in from the edges of the leaf. This is a genetic "feature" called Honeycrisp chlorosis and occurs in this and a few other varieties. It has to do with carbohydrate metabolism within the tree and can be linked to crop load. Young trees with no crop and trees with a light crop often show more chlorosis, while those with a heavy load show the least. It doesn't affect the health of the tree—in fact, the yellowing areas may be protective to avoid build up of excessive starch in leaves. It has no effect on the size of the harvest or fruit quality, so there's nothing to worry about!



Honeycrisp chlorosis looks weird, but is not a problem→