

Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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Seeds:

Foxglove has just received another order of West Coast Seeds winter lettuce varieties, corn salad and other greens. You should still be able to get a respectable crop for winter if you seed lettuce immediately. Corn salad can be sown until early September.

Plants:

Fulford Valley Organics, 2161 Fulford-Ganges Road (Contact: fulfordvalleyorganics@shaw.ca; 250-653-004) is now selling a variety of started seedlings. These will do well for winter: Rainbow Chard, Mizuna, Arugula, Kale, Spinach, Tat Soi, Pac Choi, Komatsuna. They also list lettuce, but not the varieties, so just make sure when you purchase that they are indeed winter lettuces. They list 3 varieties of broccoli, but only one, 'Purple Sprouting' is a winter variety; also 3 varieties of cauliflower, of which 'Purple Cape' is the only winter variety (it is excellent, hardy, reliable and I recommend it highly).

You might experiment with the spring/summer broccoli and cauliflower varieties FVO is selling, especially if you will be planting in a greenhouse, to see if you can get some harvest this fall. Outdoors it is likely the plants will vernalize as night temperatures drop in September, which causes them to produce button heads. Vernalization happens when half-grown plants of summer broccoli and cauliflower are exposed to temperatures below 10 degrees C. The cool temperatures cause these varieties to stop vegetative growth and put their energy into forming premature, small heads. It is a feature of plant physiology that we winter gardeners need to know about so you will be hearing more about it in future messages.

If you are going to be over in Victoria, later this month:

August 25th to Sept.2nd: Carolyn Herriott will be holding her annual sale of winter vegetable starts at her Garden Path Nursery, 395 Conway Road. 10-5:30.(Contact: thegardenpath@shaw.ca; 250-881-1555) Go early as she sells out quickly!