

Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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A reader alerted me that the Ganges Village Market is selling trays of vegetable starts so I checked it out this morning. Unfortunately, as in past years (can you tell this a pet peeve of mine?!) they are selling summer varieties of lettuce, broccoli and cauliflower -- so they will surely disappoint when planted this time of year. Plants GVM is selling that will do OK for winter are their Swiss chard and the mixed 'mesclun' greens, which appear to have some mustards and Asian greens in the flats.

Other grocery and nursery sources are also likely to start carrying vegetable transplants about this time of year so be an informed consumer when it comes to buying plants:

Here are some common winter varieties:

Lettuce: 'Arctic King', 'Rouge d'Hiver', 'Continuity', 'Winter Density' [Red Sails' is a summer lettuce]

Broccoli: 'Purple Sprouting' ['Goliath', Green Sprouting' are summer broccoli]

Cauliflower: 'Aalsmeer', 'Purple Cape' ['Snowball' types are summer cauliflowers]

Well-grown, 'summer' broccoli and cauliflower will stand well into winter if they have matured during summer (sometimes summer broccoli keeps going well past Christmas). When started as young plants this time of year, however, they will produce button heads prematurely in response to temperatures under 10 degrees C for a week or two. As it was only 9 degrees C at my house the other night, that could happen pretty soon! That's that darn 'vernalization' response for you.....