

# Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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**Greens:** of all sort With this amazing bit of warm, sunny weather, we have a last chance to make sure that plants are as well-grown as possible before winter. Thin seedlings well and transplant surplus to beds where they have more growing room. Keep greens well watered as the soil is still dry deep down despite the August rains.

**Brussels sprouts:** Studies show that best timing for pinching out the tops is when sprouts start to develop in the 7<sup>th</sup> whorl of leaves (counting from the bottom). This makes the plant concentrate growth on the sprouts rather than new growth that won't have time to develop. Cut or snap out the top cluster of leaves; they are tender and cook up well in soup or stews. Leave the lower leaves on the plants until the sprouts are full sized, by which time the leaves start to yellow and you can remove them as part of late fall cleanup. It is a good idea to drive in a couple of bamboo stakes or other supports around the plants to support them in wind (also useful for other cabbage family plants).

**Onions:** Late planted onions, especially from seedlings may only just now be starting to mature. You can tell they are maturing when the neck begins to shrivel just above the bulb and the leaves flop over. Apparently bulbs continue to grow in size after the top starts to fall over--so wait as long as possible to pull them (but don't wait until it rains again as the risk of root rot is high now). If the necks haven't started to fall over, don't try to hasten the process by bending them down artificially. This bruises the tissue and gives rot microorganisms a better chance to get in. For best results in curing them, stop watering onions a week or two before harvest. Pull onions on a dry day (leave the tops on) and spread them out in well ventilated, dry, warm conditions (but not in direct sun) to cure. Use up bulbs with thick necks that look the least mature as they aren't likely to keep well. After several weeks the tops dry completely and the necks will have sealed shut so you can clean up the bulbs and store them in cool, dry conditions

**Garlic PREVIEW:** From late September until the middle of October is ideal for planting garlic. If you are looking for seed stock, Salt Spring Seeds has a great selection of varieties:

<http://www.saltspringseeds.com/>

Click on 'Garlic' on the top right side of the page for varieties, ordering and lots on information on garlic culture.