

Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

December 4, 2009 Last chance mulch

The first real cold snap of the year is forecast to arrive in the next few days--so it is the last chance to add another layer of mulch to the vegetable garden. At this time of year I completely cover over carrot foliage and fluff up a thick new layer of leaves around leeks and stems of cole crops, around lettuce plants and over celeriac and beets. For most of the coast, by Tuesday it looks like temperatures may fall below -6 or -7C at night (colder at higher elevations), which is pushing the limit of endurance for uncovered greens. I find that leafy crops are fine to -5C, but when temperatures hit -10C it damages uncovered lettuce, spinach, chard and other greens. This is the sort of cold snap that would make me go out and throw a plastic sheet over the beds of greens for a few days until it warms up. I hold the plastic down with rocks and boards, but of course, a properly anchored tunnel or cold frame would be ideal. Well mulched root crops, Brussels sprouts, winter broccoli and cauliflower are fine without covers as are the hardiest of the greens: kale, corn salad, parsley.

With the winter solstice only 17 days away and Seedy Saturdays only two months away, all ye coastal gardeners take heart! The seed catalogues will soon be upon us.

Best wishes for the holiday,
Linda

To see my schedule of talks and gardening course for 2010, check my web site: www.lindagilkeson.ca

You can read all of my previous messages on the Salt Spring Energy Strategy website:
www.saltspringenergystrategy.org