

Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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Well, that was quite some nasty weather!

Now that the cold is finally rolling away we can see how our gardens are doing. I dug some Brussels sprouts out of the deep snow today for dinner and they were wonderfully mild and sweet—just the way sprouts should be, but so rarely are because they haven't been frosted enough.

Those with the deepest snow during this cold period will find that their vegetables fared the best (though your backs fared the worst with all the shoveling). In deep snow, damage is usually from broken stems for leeks and cabbage family crop. Root crops should be fine. Many leafy greens will be quite flattened when the snow melts, but I find they usually spring back remarkably quickly. Corn salad, which grows in a flat rosette anyway, comes out of deep snows unscathed.

A note on harvesting frosted crops: pick leaves, sprouts, and other above-ground crops after they have had a chance to thaw. Cabbages may need a several days to thaw completely inside before you harvest the heads. If you pick while plants are frozen, they thaw into mush--yet, if they thaw out while still alive they take up water and often recover well.

For those with the least snow on the ground during the cold period, you may find that leaves of greens and lettuce have been killed. While this ends your mid-winter harvest, it doesn't necessarily mean the roots are dead. You could still see a new crop of leaves sprouting in very early spring.

If you didn't have time to mulch your beds before this last blast of winter—go out and do it the minute this snow melts! We were lucky to have snow in most regions when it got cold this time, but it may not be the case if there is another Arctic outbreak.

Meanwhile—time to sort through your seed collections and note what you need for 2009. Seedy Saturday is coming to a community near you in February!

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