

# Reprint **Island Tides**

Visit [www.islandtides.com](http://www.islandtides.com) to read the current edition and more find more interesting articles on other BC, national & international topics in our extensive archive of newspapers and articles.

Reprint from Volume 23 Number 1

Jan 13, 2011

## January Garden Calendar ~ Brian Crumblehulme

On bended knee, and perspiring clammy,  
I pecked at the soil to feed my family,  
A figure than which there was none more dramatic-er,  
Alone with the bugs and my faithful sciatica.

Would you like a description of my parsley?  
I can give it to you in one word – gharsley!  
They're making playshoes out of my celery,  
It's reclaimed rubber, and purplish yellery.

Something crawly got into my chives,  
My lettuce has hookworm, my cabbage has hives.  
I mixed up the labels when sowing my carrots,  
I planted birdseed – it came up parrots.

My farming will never make me famous,  
I'm an agricultural ignoramus.  
So don't ask me to tell a string bean from a soy bean,  
I can't even tell a girl bean from a boy bean.

—Ogden Nash, 1943

Every fine day recently has found me outside tidying the flower, fruit and vegetable gardens. Dead haulms, leaves and twigs can all be removed and burnt or composted to be returned to the ground later in the spring. And if it has not already been done, pruning fruit trees and roses is essential if you want them to develop and produce anywhere close to potential. My wife's rose garden is now entering its fourth year so the roots are established and require little special attention. After cleaning and aerating the ground, I mulched each stock lightly with rotted manure and dusted with bonemeal and wood ash. Last year a number of roses bent over with the weight of flowers so I have pruned them back halfway to encourage shorter stronger stems. Even now during a few days of frost all the plants are developing new shoots and buds that will burst into rapid growth with the first warm, sunny days of February.

Still in the flower garden, lilacs (syringa) rarely need pruning but older clumps can become invasive or simply too big. If you dig around the roots of the bush you can

often find a few healthy side shoots that you can cut off and remove along with a clump of fibrous root stock that you can transplant to another location. Or: if some of the shoots have large fat terminal buds on the top indicating latent flowers, you can pot them up in five gallon containers and put them in a greenhouse or shed near a window and encourage them to grow. Then in February or March bring them into the house for a few weeks and enjoy their glorious fragrance when it's still cold outside.

In the vegetable garden now is the time to dig any vacant ground and liberally spread manure or compost with a dusting of lime. The compost can be turned into the ground before planting anytime in spring. Dolomite, phosphated, or hydrated lime, is not a fertilizer; it is a soil conditioner that reduces acidity (increases the Ph) and promotes micro-organisms. Many soils tend to become acidic (sour) if left alone, conditions that promote the growth of mosses, ferns and coniferous trees. Sourness is also coupled with excessive shade and water and incomplete decay leading to plant starvation. With the exception of rhododendrons, heathers and the like, almost all flowers and vegetables will benefit from a light application of lime before planting. This will discourage weed germination, encourage decomposition and make for happy worms.

For anyone with a greenhouse, late January is the time to begin sowing tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, cauli, cabbage, onions & leeks, petunias, sweet peas, and lobelia for your hanging baskets. I tend to sow these seeds incrementally in pots on top of the hot water tank until they have germinated, then they are whisked into the greenhouse where I have set up a mini-greenhouse-within-the-greenhouse, rather like a small plastic tent for seedlings. The broccoli, cauli and cabbage germinate very quickly without this extra boost but many of the slower developing plants will gain a week or two. After germination all seedlings must be provided with good

© Island Tides Publishing Ltd. This article may be reproduced with this attribution, in its entirety, with notification to Island Tides Publishing Ltd.

This article was published (Jan 13, 2011) in 'Island Tides'. 'Island Tides' is an independent, regional newspaper distributing 18,000 print copies throughout the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island from Victoria to Campbell River.

Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada. Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.  
Email: [islandtides@islandtides.com](mailto:islandtides@islandtides.com). Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>

light, moderate warmth and good ventilation or they will quickly die.

By month end the days are longer and the light becomes more intense so on any mild day you can try sowing a few seeds of hardy salads and vegetables. Lettuce, rapini, mesclun greens, carrots and potatoes will all take a mild frost without damage, and remember, light well drained soils are far warmer than those made of clay.

### Winter Cooking

Who invented chocolate praline? Mint with lamb? Honey on cheese? Cheese on apple pie? Some of the most incongruous combinations of foods traditionally located continents apart can sometimes be blissfully married without upsetting the gods. These days chefs and food processors scour the globe in search of novelties but sitting at home on a cold wet evening with a glass of wine and a collection of old cookbooks occasionally discloses little gems that are the perfect antidote to mid-winter blah.

### Pumpion Pie

This is a New England creation from colonial days. Originally a savory pumpkin pie the recipe lends itself to almost any winter squash. Preheat an oven to 400degrees.

- 1 shortcrust pie shell, pre-baked
- 6 rashers of good quality back bacon
- 1 medium red onion, chopped (or a mild white onion with a couple of garlic cloves)
- 1/2 cup chopped ham
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- 2 beaten eggs
- 1 can pumpkin or steamed winter squash
- A large pinch of salt, pepper, thyme, oregano, anise or fennel seed

Fry the bacon in a skillet until half cooked. Remove and drain the rashers and set aside. Add the onion to the hot bacon fat and fry until just transparent then stir in all the remaining ingredients. Mix well and cook for 5 minutes until thoroughly heated. Spread the filling into the pastry shell, top with the half-cooked bacon and place in a hot oven for 15-20 minutes until the bacon is crisp. Serves 4-6 hot or cold. Makes a good lunch, appetizer (as finger food), or entrée on any winter day.

### Chestnuts with Garlic

Sweet chestnuts are a traditional French food but this sauce is an English adaptation for meat lovers.

- 200grams fresh chestnuts, cooked for about 20 minutes

- 2 rashers of bacon chopped fine
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 3-4 cloves garlic
- salt & pepper and olive oil

Peel and chop the chestnuts. Fry the bacon bits in just enough oil to prevent burning. Add the onion and garlic and cook for 10 minutes stirring frequently. Blend in the chestnuts and seasoning and re-heat until hot. Spoon over lamb or pork roast, ham, sausages—what have you. It's greasy, hot, and good, so serve with a full-bodied red wine such as a Shiraz.

### A Drunken Loaf, From The Time Of Shakespeare

- 1/2 a dry baguette or a few slices of toasted white bread
- At least a cup of good red wine
- 1 serving of unflavoured cooked pasta. Or a few sticks of spaghetti well cooked
- some butter and 1/2 cup whipping cream
- At least a cup of grated Mozzarella
- Nutmeg & pepper to taste

Break the dry bread into the bottom of a casserole and cover with the wine. The bread should soak up most of the wine but not drown in it. Cook the pasta, drain off the water and return to the pan with a hearty dab of butter, cream and spices. Mix well and cook gently for 5 minutes and mash or blend for 3 seconds in a food processor. Add half the cheese, mix again and pour over the bread and wine. Top with the remaining cheese and bake for 10-20 minutes until hot and golden. Serve hot. Again this strange dish makes a good lunch or a side dish for dinner. The flavours are strong and go well with BBQ'd meat and Caesar salad.

### Cyder Syllabub

- 2 cups whipping cream
- 1 bottle apple cider
- sugar & cinnamon to taste

When you are ready for dessert, whip the cream until thick. Add 1/4 bottle cider and whip again. Add another 1/4 bottle and so on until the cream has absorbed all the cider. Add sugar to taste. Pour into glasses and dust with cinnamon. Serve immediately with gingerbread cookies. ☺

---

© Island Tides Publishing Ltd. This article may be reproduced with this attribution, in its entirety, with notification to Island Tides Publishing Ltd.

This article was published (Jan 13, 2011) in 'Island Tides'. 'Island Tides' is an independent, regional newspaper distributing 18,000 print copies throughout the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island from Victoria to Campbell River.

Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada. Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.  
Email: islandtides@islandtides.com. Website: http://www.islandtides.com

---