

# THE BUMBLEBEE

The Latest Buzz from Skookum Food Provisioners' Co-op

## *Planning Your Garden*

It's January... and the perfect time to plan your garden for the year. In this issue of the newsletter we'll look at planning from several different viewpoints — planning for food production, as usual, but also planning for preserving (wouldn't it be nice to space out the harvest you're going to preserve, instead of it arriving all at once?), and planning for seed saving.

We'll also pay attention to what you can start growing right now: food from the windowsill, things that need to start this early, and the technique of Winter Sowing.

What about the food you grew last year and stored? Now is a great time to maintain the pantry; checking for fresh stuff that needs to be eaten, and spreading canned and frozen food over the coming months so that you have a better selection come spring than 10 jars of that relish that didn't quite come out right J

It's almost time for Skookum's Annual General Meeting, which this year will be held using a video meeting. Please consider stepping up to become a director — it's not terribly time consuming but it's very worthwhile (and the people are nice!).

This winter and spring, with COVID still keeping us apart, Skookum and the Urban Homesteading School will be cooperating to produce a series of how-to videos on food provisioning topics. These will be short and focused — and perhaps you can contribute? If you know how to do something, can demonstrate it, and record it on your phone, tablet, webcam, or digital camera, we want to hear from you! Whether it's gardening, preserving, cooking, baking, building equipment, using tools... all is of interest.

Kevin Wilson, Skookum President



Seen this week: An optimistic crocus?

### *What to start indoors now:*

Onions and leeks (end  
January and into  
February)  
Artichokes from seed

*I found that planting in a cold frame is a very effective way to grow vegetables year round. And it is inexpensive to build. I have five cold frames properly built by a carpenter using 2X8 cedar.*

*And they have always been supplying me with fresh vegetables to eat. They have been sitting on the south side of my greenhouse for 25 years, they are getting old but are still functional.*  
*Diana Wood*

# *Planning for Seed Saving*

BY WENDY DEVLIN

As a dedicated seed-saver for many years, I offer here my three top tips:

- Start this year. There's no better time.
- Save seeds from plants you love growing or eating.
- Look at photos about how plants grow out for seed. Especially how BIG they'll get before harvest.



Brassica plants ready for seed harvest. Photo: Kevin Wilson

Now for some details:

**Start planning to save seeds with easy-to-save vegetable and flower seeds.** Within one year, you'll have an abundance of seed to grow next season. You can save money growing your own and have lots to share with others. Plus, properly saved seed generally germinates well and grows healthy seedlings.

## *Resources*

### How to start seeds indoors

[gardenhomesteading.com/gardening/how-to-start-seeds-indoors-and-outdoors-the-best-way-to-start-seeds/](https://gardenhomesteading.com/gardening/how-to-start-seeds-indoors-and-outdoors-the-best-way-to-start-seeds/)

### Free light stand plans

[gardenhomesteading.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Light-Stand-plans.pdf](https://gardenhomesteading.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Light-Stand-plans.pdf)



**If you save seeds from plants you like, you're more likely to give them the care they'll need** through the season. Although plants naturally set seed, they will need weeding and watering and keeping free of disease through the growing season. When the seed pods start maturing, you need to watch that they can dry well, as late moisture encourages mold and sometimes the seed will rot before you have a chance to save it.

*Big-seeded vegetables* like peas and beans are simple to save.

*Flowering plants* like herbs, tomatoes, nasturtiums, or poppies have lots of seeds that are easy to save. Start with open-pollinated varieties not hybrids, as their saved seeds will be more like their parent plants. Once you've mastered seeds that are easy to save you can work your way into saving seeds that are more challenging.

Some vegetables are *biennial*, meaning they don't set seed until their second year, and you need to overwinter the plants or their roots.

*Vegetables in the same plant family* — like zucchinis, pumpkins, and other squash — will cross-pollinate and when you grow out the saved seed, the offspring will be a mixture. Although most hybrids of edible crops are edible too, you may find the color, size, flavor, etc. different from their parent plants. Ditto for crops in the cole family like broccoli and cauliflower.



Brassica pods on tarp being crushed to release seeds.



Brassica seeds

Photos: Kevin Wilson

**Check to see what size your plants will grow to.** When I started saving seed, I had never seen many vegetables grown out for seed, especially biennial vegetables like beets, parsnips, etc. As a result, when one beet started to grow the second year, it wasn't long before the plant measured a meter high and a meter across! Often the weight of the seed heads cause the plant to fall over, smothering nearby plants or causing the seed heads to get moldy from contact with the soil. So, look at photos of mature plants to get some idea whether you'll need to stake the plants or tie to a fence etc. before the seed is dry enough to harvest.

Photos will also give examples of how seed pods look when they are dry enough to harvest. There is lots of information and instructions on saving seeds online. There's no better year than 2021!



**"Start this year. There's no time better."**

*Winter Sowing* is a specific method of sowing seeds in winter, and placing them outside with protection to sprout when the time is right. It's a great way to play in the dirt during the long dark days and to get lots of plants in little space. You can use it for flowers, herbs, and vegetables; annuals and perennials.

*wintersown.org*

*facebook.com/groups/wintersown*

*Kevin Wilson*

# Planning for Food Production

BY KEVIN WILSON

This is what we normally think of when we say “Garden Planning”:  
What will we grow, where, when, and how much of it?

Here are some hints and tips on how to decide where to plant what in your garden:

- Place the most picky plants first. There may only be a few places with the right conditions for tomatoes, for example. Small and adaptable vegetables, like lettuce or radishes, can be tucked around other things.
- Move things around each year to help prevent diseases.
- Give priority to rotating:
  - Nightshades (tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, eggplants, tomatillos, etc.)
  - Brassicas (cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, kohlrabi, etc.)
  - Cucurbits (squash, pumpkins, cucumbers, gourds, zucchini, etc.)
  - Onion family (onions of all kinds, scallions, garlic, leeks, etc.)
- Keep a record of your plantings to help with future years rotation.

Other ways to organize planting:

- Place tall things to the north, short things to the south
- Place climbers where they can be supported
- Place things together that will overwinter
- Place things together that will be harvested at the same time, so the space can be cleared for the next crop

Don't...

- Mix annuals and perennials (except maybe quick annuals around young perennials, but not too close)
- Grow the same thing in the same place year after year
- Place things too close together

Some of these maxims may conflict, or be impossible in your garden. Don't worry, do the best you can. This is an incremental process! You may have to go back to earlier stages and loop around several times. Not everything will be relevant to you and your garden. You probably can't grow everything.

**"This is an incremental process! You may have to go back to earlier stages and loop around several times."**

This is my own 2-part series on planning:

[Part 1: Where to place your vegetable garden](#)

[Part 2: What type and size of vegetable garden?](#)

West Coast Seeds planting charts and guides for our region:

[Vegetables](#)

[Cover Crops](#)

[Fall & Winter Harvest](#)





## *Planning for Preserving*

BY NICOLE NARBONNE

As a long time gardener (and daughter of a woman who was born in the dirty thirties), I have always been quite determined to make the best use of the fruits (and vegetables) of our labour. We always have an excess of something or another. So I learned how to cook, how to preserve, how to manage the excesses of extreme garden successes, and how to make do with crop failures.

Although planning for preserving is a goal to which I aspire, I understand the fallacy of relying on the purchase of seed to guarantee that you will be able to put up 24 jars of tomatoes and 6 jars of dills to see you through the winter. It just doesn't work that way.

Even if you know your soil and climate, even when you have done everything right to prepare the beds, manage the predators, irrigate, and weed, you will likely find yourself with buckets of squash one year and improper pollination the next.

When I first started out on this gardening / preserving journey, I saw it as a badge of honour if every single ingredient in that jar came from my own garden. As it turns out, that is not what is required to achieve the badge. Don't worry if you can't grow peppers in your soil. A jar of salsa made with my home-grown zucchini, tomatoes, and peppers does not taste any different than the jar I made with peppers from the farmer's market.

- Plan your garden around things you love to eat fresh.
- Grow things your children like to watch grow, like peas, beans, and tomatoes.
- Stagger your planting so you aren't trying to eat or process everything at once.
- Preserving is what I do when the garden explodes; when the peas need to be frozen, the beans need to be dilled, and the tomatoes need to be canned.

**"...it's all about making it work with what you actually harvest, and for sure, maintaining your sense of humour."**

Planning is great. I have already ordered my seeds for 2021, hoping for that perfect salsa. But in the real world of gardening, it's all about making it work with what you actually harvest, and for sure, maintaining your sense of humour.

Grow what you can, and can what you grow.

## Nicole's Party Salsa

*Everyone needs a recipe that uses a ton of zucchini for when the neighbours start dropping them on doorsteps and running away. This is my all time favourite. I adjust the amount of heat by sometimes substituting habanero peppers or canned chipotles for a smoky taste, or whatever the neighbours are growing.*

Prepare about 11 pint jars and lids.

10 c grated zucchini  
4 chopped onions  
2 green peppers, chopped  
2 red peppers, chopped  
1/4 c coarse salt  
4 jalapeno peppers (or hotter!)

Mix these together and let sit all day or overnight.  
Drain.

5 Tbsp dry mustard  
4 cloves garlic, minced (at least)  
1 Tbsp cumin  
1 Tbsp turmeric  
2 Tbsp cayenne pepper  
2 c vinegar  
1 c brown sugar  
5 – 6 c chopped tomatoes  
1/2 c sun-dried tomatoes soaked in boiling water & chopped a bit  
2 tins tomato paste  
4 chopped hot peppers

Mix all together, then add to above mixture. Bring to boil and simmer 30 – 40 minutes. When nice and thick, pour into jars and can 30 minutes.  
(You can add cilantro but I think it tastes like soap, so I don't use it! Apparently loving or hating cilantro is a cultural thing, so I can blame my mother for this one too.)

[nicolesfarmkitchen.com/2010/08/nicoles-party-salsa.html](http://nicolesfarmkitchen.com/2010/08/nicoles-party-salsa.html)



*I was nanny granny this past spring and for something to do with my grandson Wilder, I restored the small stony weed patch at their rental house in Victoria, and we planted peas, tomatoes, strawberries, spinach, green onions, and herbs. My son and his wife are not gardeners but I put down landscape fabric to deter weeds and set up a timer and drip hose. They didn't run out of tomatoes all summer. Was a fabulous adventure.*

Nicole Narbonne

*We have a lasagna garden underway. It is covered in cardboard now, and on top, a layer of leaves to hold the cardboard down, some of which was flying around the lawn. I plan to dump the two large containers of compost on top. The next step is to fence in the yard to prevent the salad eaters, i.e. deer, from getting in. Our first vegetable garden is becoming shadier and shadier hence the new lasagna garden. We have a problem this year with rats in the compost and also digging up and chewing on the potatoes. Time for our neighbour rather to pay a visit. I hope to buy seeds at Springtime Gardens and plant the pea seeds that I saved from last year's crop.*

Cynthia Barnes

# *List of Things to Plan For*

BASIC LIST INSPIRED BY GIOVANNI SPEZZACATENA, WITH ADDITIONS

**Pruning dates and goals** — freestanding and espalier fruit trees, and other plants; specific to our region; winter pruning versus other times of year; pruning when it will get best result; times for different types of fruit trees

**Effects of climate change** — what can we expect to see re: crop changes in the next 20 years. Not an easy one, but we are going there, like it or not.

**Winter growing and harvesting (for next winter)** — what to grow; when to plant it; when to harvest; season extension equipment and techniques

**Seed sourcing** — what to save yourself and what to buy; what to buy locally and what to mail order; how much to buy vs seed lifespan; bulk seed buying with others

**Expanding our plant repertoire** — Vegetables that we don't culturally eat here but that would do great — like rapini, Asian greens, etc. Maybe a look at coastal cultures that share our climate specifics, and research on what they grow that we could too.

**Food preservation, storage, and bulk buying** — What to buy vs grow; shopping strategies to get best value; where to shop for what, for cost/quality benefits; managing the pantry for best use and least waste; best methods for preserving each food; whether to plan for a big one-time harvest or a spread-out flow; making space for storage

**Fertility sourcing and application** — where to get nutrient and organic matter materials locally; whether to compost them or not; when to apply them; how much to use; how to “grow your own”; optimising soil fertility for different crop sequences; how to keep nutrients from escaping

**Pest and disease management** — What, when, and how to apply various techniques to prevent or mitigate problems; physical barriers; planting and harvesting times; observation; encouraging and/or releasing pest predators; soil management; crop rotation; preventative materials; last-resort organic pesticides

**Sales from the garden** — quantities to grow and timing according to hoped-for sales; sales channels; income & expenses

**Water** — multiple sources; distribution; improving soil water retention; reducing water losses

**Animals** — integrating animals into your garden fertility; predator protection; feeding with local materials; housing; breeding; end-of-life issues

**Community connections** — how can your garden support others; what will you need from others; how will what your neighbours grow affect you, and vice versa



# *Food from the Windowsill*

BY KEVIN WILSON

What can you grow to eat right now, indoors?

## **Sprouts**

Because you'll be directly eating the seeds, you want them to be cleaner than regular planting seeds, and ideally to be organic. Can you use your own seed? It's hard to clean it well enough —

bits of chaff etc. may go moldy during the sprouting process. Good varieties to start with are alfalfa, clover, brassicas, lentils & bean mixes.

Places to buy sprouting seeds:

- Bulk from Ecosystems
- Mother Nature has them from West Coast Seeds
- Online order from West Coast Seeds ([westcoastseeds.com](http://westcoastseeds.com))
- Online order from Mums ([sprouting.com](http://sprouting.com))

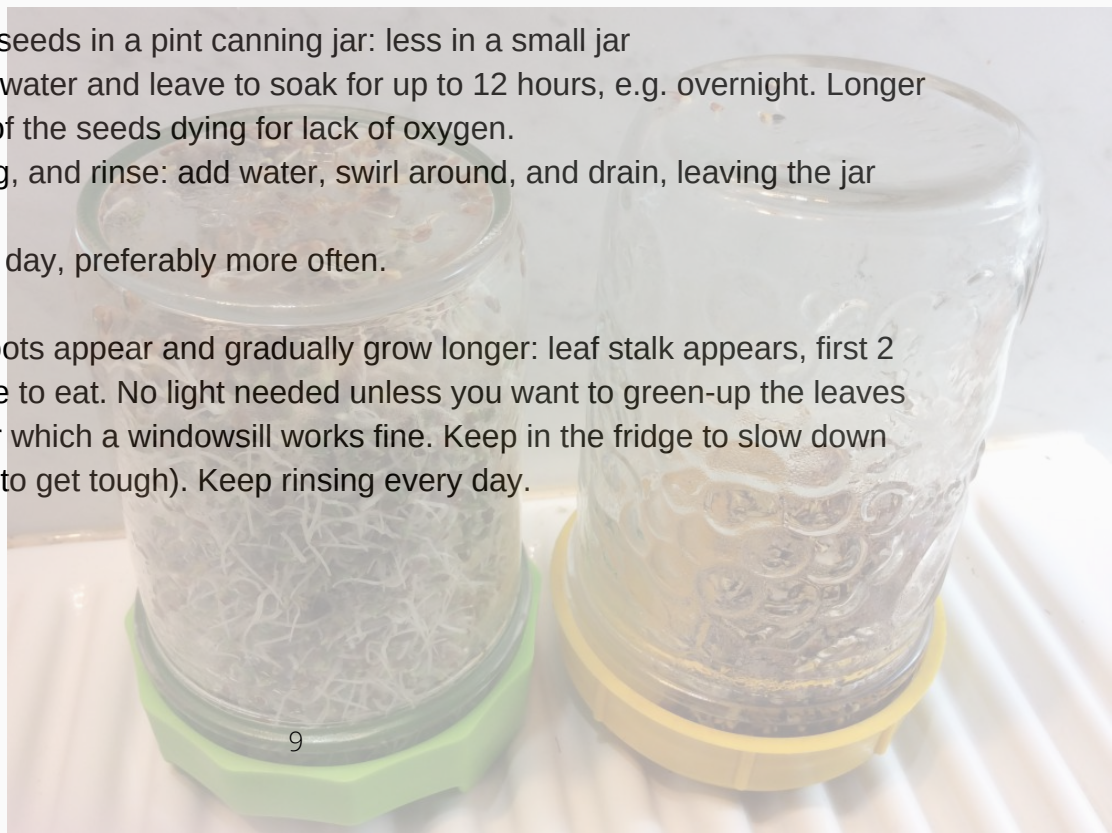
Equipment

- Wide mouth canning jar
- A top that will drain water while keeping the seeds in the jar:
  1. plastic mesh lids that come in sets of different sizes
  2. netting fabric and a canning jar ring (will rust over time) or elastic band
  3. metal mesh and canning jar ring (from Ecosystems)
- Commercial sprouting rigs are available, that have multiple levels and rinse automatically. They are expensive.

How to Grow

1. Place 1 tsp to 1 tbsp seeds in a pint canning jar: less in a small jar
2. Add about an inch of water and leave to soak for up to 12 hours, e.g. overnight. Longer and you run the risk of the seeds dying for lack of oxygen.
3. Drain off after soaking, and rinse: add water, swirl around, and drain, leaving the jar upside down.
4. Rinse at least once a day, preferably more often.

After a few days, small roots appear and gradually grow longer: leaf stalk appears, first 2 seed leaves: then it's time to eat. No light needed unless you want to green-up the leaves on the last day or two, for which a windowsill works fine. Keep in the fridge to slow down further growth (they start to get tough). Keep rinsing every day.



## Microgreens

These are the next stage of growth after sprouts: grow until first true leaf appears.

Seed cleanliness is not quite so important as with sprouts since you won't be eating the actual seeds — you can use your own saved seed.

Use weed-free soil in trays. Bagged potting soil is OK, I use a mix of 2 parts coir, 2 parts Sea Soil, and one part perlite. Homemade compost is fine if it's weed-free.

Trays can be regular seedling trays or from the recycling bin. You can use unperforated trays if you are very careful with watering. You don't get much weight of greens off each tray, so you may want to grow a whole 11x22 tray of one thing at a time, or sow several in one tray — timing may be awkward as different seeds take different times to get to the right stage to eat. You'll need to do some experimenting in your conditions to find out how long things take. A heat mat helps a lot if you're using a cool location.

Light is needed — shop lights, plant lights, maybe a very bright window.

### Process:

- Pre-soak large seeds like peas or sunflowers for 2–12 hours, no longer.
- Place 1–2" of damp (not wet) soil into tray, level out.
- Sprinkle seeds on soil surface. An old spice jar with a perforated lid helps to sprinkle small seeds evenly.
- Press gently into contact with soil.
- Water lightly.
- Place another same-size tray on top and weight it down (with a book, for example).

At this point you can turn on the heat mat if using, but you don't need light. Wait 3–7 days until the growing seedlings are starting to lift up the cover tray. Take off the cover tray, water lightly if needed, and turn on the lights. It's best to have the lights and heat mat on a timer, 15–18 hours per day.

- Grow on until first true leaf just starts to show... or shorter or longer, your choice.
- Harvest by cutting just above soil level with scissors or a sharp knife.
- Rinse off to remove any seed hulls.

Use in sandwiches, salads, smoothies, snacks, and as a garnish!

## Regrowth from Vegetable scraps

Beets, carrots, onions, turnips, shallots celery, bulb fennel, lettuce, bok choy, cilantro  
Sweet potatoes (can eat the leaves)  
Plant garlic cloves in potting soil for green garlic.  
<https://www.ruralsprout.com/regrow-vegetables/>  
<https://www.diyncrafts.com/4732/repurpose/25-foods-can-re-grow-kitchen-scrap>