
July

The month of red and white—Canada Day colours and that most exquisite of desserts, strawberry shortcake. The u-pick is a destination of choice for these luscious first fruits of summer which freeze well with a minimum of preparation: just snip the hulls off! I have also recently discovered the joys of everbearing strawberries in my backyard garden: though not abundant, they still were producing ripe fruit in mid-September—more than enough for our morning breakfast cereal.

In truly wet and/or disorganized years, I and my family have planted our garden in the first week of July with few ill effects, so don't feel badly if you just didn't get it together in May and June or if the weather didn't cooperate.

By now, the cool weather crops like lettuce and spinach will have started to bolt. If you're a keener, you can save the small, dark seeds on the bolted part of the plant for next year.

Unless you're exceptionally lucky and/or exceptionally vigilant, insect pests will have made their presence felt in the garden by now. My nemesis is the slug: voracious and non-discriminating in its tastes (unlike the also repulsive but at least more specific potato beetle), it hides under mulch and is on the move in the cool of the early morning and late evening . What to do?

Lay down boards around the garden; slugs like to congregate underneath these and can be easily removed by hand and drowned in a bucket of soapy water or can of salt.

The old beer trick: make sure there's enough in your saucer or tuna can for the slug to drown in. If you're loath to part with your expensive micro-brewed IPA, why not pay a visit to your local tavern and ask the waiter/waitress for the evening's leftovers?

Grapefruit halves: after consuming the citrus, lay these cut side down throughout the garden: slugs are attracted to these stately pleasure domes and can be collected (as above) and drowned in the morning.

