



## SIGNS OF SPRING – from NBCHG Garden Director Carol Muncer

I went looking for crocuses in the garden and didn't see any, they probably flowered under the snow. I did however find garlic peeking out of the ground, the sorrel and chives were growing tall enough to sample, the Jolly Jump Ups were about to flower, the violet plants are starting to grow, and I found some fall planted spinach growing having survived the winter. Amazing.

The ground is thawing nicely and in many areas dry enough for early planting. With the Covid 19 pandemic changing the way we all deal with day to day activities, it is never more important to be getting outside in the fresh air, growing our own food and enjoying nature.....AS LONG AS WE DO IT SAFELY ENSURING PHYSICAL DISTANCING. Now that we've received the official OK from our provincial government that we can open our gardens, we will continue to work hard to set up gardener protocols to ensure it will be safe for everyone. STAY TUNED!

On Facebook I saw a mention of **plant phenology**, a very interesting old skill. It is using observances of nature to decide when to plant our gardens:

- When crocuses appear, it's safe to plant radish, parsnip and spinach
- When Forsythia blooms, plant out peas, onion sets, and lettuce seed.
- When the daffodils bloom, plant out your beet, carrot, and chard seeds.
- Dandelions in bloom indicate it's safe to plant potatoes.
- When Apple trees blossom, you can plant your bush bean seeds
- When the apple blossoms fall, and the lilacs are in full bloom, you can plant cucumber & squash seeds

### Seeds to Plant early in spring

Are you anxious to get growing, now is the time to start thinking about starting some cool weather plants. This is how grandma knew when the soil was ready to plant: take a handful of garden soil and squeeze, if it crumbles when you open your hand, your ground is dry enough to plant, if you make a mud ball, wait...

Spinach, other spring greens, radish, and peas can all be planted as soon as your ground is thawed and dry enough. You don't gain much by starting peas while the soil is too cold, they just grow slower. Spinach is a green that only grows well in the spring and fall, it doesn't like heat and quickly bolts and goes to seed when the weather gets hot. Spinach won't even germinate if the soil is too warm. Likewise, radishes are best grown early in spring or in the fall. You can get a radish crop in as little as a month. If you plant too late your radishes will be woody, and your plants will bolt and go to seed. If this happens to your radish, don't despair, the green seed pods taste just like radish, and are equally crispy, you will still something edible for your effort.

### Planting Early Starts

You should have already started your slow growing herbs, and your tomatoes, peppers, and cabbage family all started, but it is not too late if you haven't. If the weather holds, you should soon be able to start members of the cucumber family if you like to start them early, and some of the faster growing herbs, also beans, Swiss chard and beets. To be honest, I never bother to start the last 3 veggies I mentioned indoors, they grow nicely direct seeded.

### Wild Edibles:

People talk about not mowing their lawns while the dandelions are flowering to feed the bees, stating the dandelion is the first plant to flower. I have discovered a dandelion look alike which is flowering now, it is also edible. It is the coltsfoot, there are other plants by the same common name but I am talking about the one that is flowering now. To help identify it, look for the flowers growing in disturbed, rocky areas, by the roads, empty lots, etc. There will be flowers with woolly looking stems, and no leaves. The leaves come when the flower dies. Check out our website: we have information on coltsfoot and two more wild edibles which will soon be starting to flower, dandelion and violet.      Coltsfoot                      Dandelion                      Violet

