



Alamosa Landscapes

Indian Summer is Here

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Welcome to Indian summer or should I say fall! I hope your gardens survived the heavy snow and wind storm two weeks ago. We covered our vulnerable vegetables – tomatoes and winter squash. We brought in our few hanging plants and geraniums. The two whiskey half-barrels of petunias actually did alright as the snow insulated them and they were protected from the wind. They aren't as perky as they were before but are providing some lovely color and producing new blooms. Flower pots are once again outside until the next frost which shouldn't be until at least next week according to forecasts.

I'm happy to report that we have many tomatoes ripening on the vine. We covered them for several nights and the heavy snow helped insulate them during the coldest nights. Our temperatures for the next week or so are predicted to remain above freezing – in the high 30's for the lows.

As I mentioned last time we grew a lot of winter squash this season. Most web sites recommend leaving them on the vine until the stems get corky. While I love this idea, with the large amount of moisture and warm temperatures following the storm, we started detecting a funky smell of rotting leaves in the squash portion of the garden. Concerned that the leaves might harm the squash (I could use some help here as I've never encountered this before!), we harvested all the winter squash in the back garden.

Sadly, many of them were still not ripe. So, what to do? I searched the web for help and learned about curing winter squash. According to the harvesttotable.com website, "curing is a form of drying, as water evaporates from the squash it becomes sweeter tasting as sugars are concentrated, and it causes the skin to become harder." The website says acorn squash should not be cured, that they don't tolerate frost, and need sunlight to ripen, and don't ripen easily once cut. Dang! I have several that did not mature in the garden. I got a different variety of a variegated white/green type that I have not used before – it was all that was available this year when I ordered seeds as so many folks planted vegetable gardens and ordered seeds before I did. I'll keep them in our cool, dark garage and see what happens. They are such a nice squash for cooking individual portions.

Many websites suggest curing at temperatures between 80 – 85 deg. F for 10 days or so at

relative humidity of 80-85 percent. I don't have the ability to do all of that so am letting them cure in our small indoor greenhouse that gets temperatures up to, and sometimes above, 85 during the day. Temperatures get much lower at night and Alamosa humidity is much drier. We'll see how it goes!

We had a number of small, pie pumpkins that weren't quite ripe. I did cure them for a week and most finished turning orange and have a hard shell. They're in a cool dark place and I'll test them in a couple of weeks and report back. I love making pies and soup out of them.

Our spaghetti squash are in a more protected part of the garden and seem to continue to do well. I'll keep checking them and will harvest them once their skins don't respond well to trying to pierce them with a fingernail. It's a clue that they are ripe if you can't easily pierce them. I expect this will be in the next week or so.

Carrots and yellow beets are still doing well. I hope to continue harvesting them in the next month. Chard, mustard greens, and parsley are also hanging in there.

Take care and stay safe.

"To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival."
Wendell Berry