

Spinach: Spinach is usually harvested when the plants have 5-6 leaves and can continue to be harvested until just before seeds develop and the plant bolts. At this point, cut the entire plant off just above the soil level.

Summer Squash (Zucchini, Crookneck, Scallop, etc.): These vegetables should be picked when young and tender and about 3 to 6 inches in length. Yellow squash should still be pale yellow when picked. Scallop squash should be greenish-yellow. Skin should still be soft when punctured by a fingernail. The fruit is too old to pick and use if the rind is too hard to be marked by a fingernail.

Tomatoes: For best flavor tomatoes should ripen on the plants. Green tomatoes can be stored in a cool, moist, dark place. To ripen them, bring into a warm room; light is not essential for ripening. Green tomatoes can be harvested and brought indoors to ripen, as long as the outdoor temperature has not dropped below 40° F, which prevents the fruit from ripening. Another option is to pull the whole plant, along with their green fruits and store in a cool, frost-free area. Fruit can be ripened in warmer temperatures when needed. Refrigerating ripe tomatoes ruins the flavor and texture of the fruit.

Turnips and Rutabagas: These root crops can be harvested when about 2 inches in diameter. Turnips get pithy inside if allowed to get too large. Rutabagas do not have a tendency to do this therefore they may be left in the ground for use during winter.



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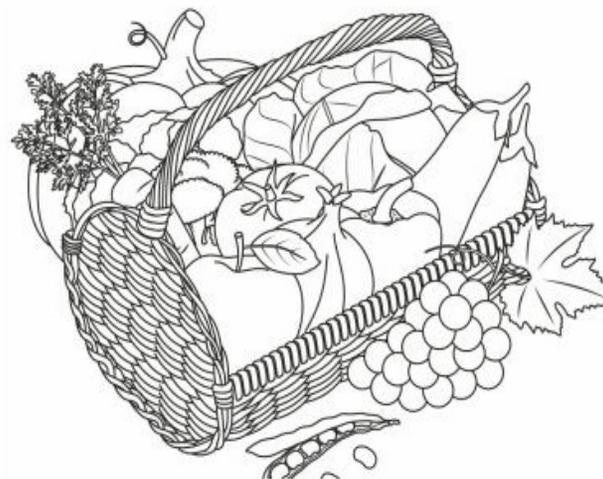
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The Vegetable Harvest How to Manage it



Vegetables should be picked at the proper time to assure best quality and to retain their optimum vitamin and mineral content. When left in the garden too long, vegetables can become fibrous, tough or rotten. Sweet veggies are your reward for all your gardening work.

Asparagus: Harvest the spears when they are 6 to 8 inches tall, before the tips begin to separate

Beans: Start harvesting when the pods reach about 3 inches long, while they are still young and tender. The beans and seeds inside the pods should be beginning to bulge the sides a bit.

Beets: Harvest beets when 1 to 1½ inches in diameter, Beets larger than 3 inches become woody.

Broccoli: Harvest broccoli before the buds begin to swell and show yellow colored flowers. Cut while the buds are still tight. After the head is harvested, smaller side shoots will sprout for later harvest.

Cabbage: Cabbage heads are ready to harvest as soon as they become fully firm. Heads will split if left growing too long and they become over-mature.



Cauliflower: When cauliflower heads reach 2 to 3 inches in diameter, they will need to be “blanched” in order to get pure white heads. Blanching is a process where the outer leaves are tied together, completely enclosing and shading the cauliflower head. This keeps the head from turning greenish-white. Harvest when heads are still compact and fairly smooth.

Chard: You can start to harvest chard anytime the plants develop 4 or 5 leaves. Cut leaves 1-2 inches from the ground (which helps protect the growing point). Old leaves become tough and stringy. Leave a few leaves on the plant so it can manufacture food to keep producing leaves.

Carrots: They are tastier when harvested at finger size, but can be harvested larger. Carrots may also be left in the ground and covered with a thick layer of mulch and harvested in the winter. For winter storage twist off the foliage and place roots in layers of sand in a box. Store in a cool, dry place for up to 5 months.

Corn: Harvest sweet corn when the kernels are plump, at the stage when the silks are dry and brown. The cobs should be well filled out. Kernels should be soft, tender and filled with a milky juice. Cook as soon as possible because the sugar in the kernels rapidly turns to starch and become tough. Get corn refrigerated as soon as possible if it can't be cooked right away

Cucumbers: Harvest cucumbers when they are still young and green and the seed still soft. A yellowish color on the skin indicates the seeds are mature and the fruit is over mature. Picking should be done every other day.

Kohlrabi: Kohlrabi should be harvested when the enlarged stems have become 1½ to 3 inches in diameter. If they are allowed to become larger they get tough and stringy, indeed, even woody.

Lettuce: Proper time to harvest lettuce depends a on the type of lettuce. Head lettuce is ready as soon as it becomes firm. Bibb and leaf lettuce are harvested when the plants get large enough to use. Just pull older, outer leaves for use, leaving the plant to continue producing leaves. In this way, leaf lettuce can be harvested over a long period of time.

Onions—Green onions or scallions should be pulled whenever they get big enough. Use right away for best flavor, **Onions for storage** shouldn't be pulled until they are mature (tops fall over and are brown). Pull, then put on a tray or screen to cure (outer skin becomes dry). After curing, braid onion tops or cut off 1½ to 2 inches above the bulb. Place onions in mesh bags or crate, in a dry, cool area with temperatures between 30° to 50° F. If onions sprout or send out roots, this means temperatures are too high and/or conditions too moist.



Parsnips: For parsnips to taste good and be high quality, they should be left in the ground until late fall or early winter. Freezing temperatures increase the sugar content and improves the flavor considerably. Store parsnips in a cool, dry place and don't allow them to dry out. Keep in a moist medium like sand or vermiculite.

Peas: Pea pods should be slightly filled out and swollen. Pick peas every 3-5 days. If mature pods remain on the vines, they will reduce crop production. For best flavor and quality, pick just before they will be eaten, so sugars don't turn to starch, which ruins the flavor. Edible pea pods or sugar peas are picked when 2 to 3 inches long, before seeds fill out and turn hard and tough.

Peppers: Peppers are picked whenever they are large enough to use when still in the green or yellow stage. In order to ripen peppers, leave them on plant in order to turn red, at which point they become somewhat sweeter. Upper county gardeners might not have a long enough growing season to get peppers fully ripe.

Potatoes: Harvest early to mid-season potatoes when the tops have turned brown and died down, but before any heavy freezes. Dry on a tray or screen for a couple of hours in order to toughen potato skins. Store in a dark, cool (45° F), well ventilated space. Don't allow potatoes to freeze.



Pumpkins and Winter Squash: These vegetables should be harvested after the vines begin to shrivel and dry out, but before heavy frost. Pumpkin and winter squash skins should color-up and become hardened and tough. Cut the stems leaving a two inch stub on the fruit. Don't wash the fruit. Store in a warm, dry area.

Radishes: Radishes are ready to harvest when about the size of a dime. If they are allowed to get too big, they become hollow, woody, and/or pithy. Often the tops will push above the soil when they are ready for harvest.

Rhubarb: A hardy perennial that can last 20 or more years in the garden. Harvest in spring and early summer after the stems turn red. Harvest stems by gripping each stem at the base and twisting while pulling upward and outward. Discard the foliage, it is potentially harmful if consumed but safe to compost.