

ASK THE MASTER GARDENER

Although fall is generally considered “harvest time,” home gardeners actually harvest most all of spring, summer and into the fall. So when is the best time? Here are some harvesting tips that might help.

Lettuce and radishes are cool weather crops and should be harvested as soon as they look ready, before the hot weather starts. They can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

Green onions, also called spring onions, can be harvested when they are just the size that you like them. They can be stored in the refrigerator for two weeks or dried or frozen.

Carrots should be harvested before really hot weather. Check for size about mid-July, but remember carrots can stay in the ground until you are ready to use them. Carrots can be dehydrated or canned easily for use in soups and stews.

Potatoes are harvested when the tops die off. Cure them for about a week in a well-ventilated, shaded place such as a garage or a barn. Do not expose them to sunlight or they will turn green. Potatoes can be canned, frozen, dehydrated or just kept in a cool place. Storage time is about two to four months.

Beets can be harvested when they are about one-inch in diameter. Beet greens (tops) make excellent tender greens at this time or when you are thinning your beets. For the best quality beets, harvest all the rest of the crop when the beets are two to three inches in diameter. Beets should all be harvested before the first moderate freeze. They can be stored for about four months or you can pickle or can them.

Zucchini or summer squash should be harvested when it is young and tender and the skin can be easily penetrated with a fingernail. They can be stored in the refrigerator for about a week or they can be grated and frozen or sliced and frozen or dried. Those that get away from you and become baseball-bat size can be stuffed and baked or even sliced and put on the BBQ grill. And remember, there’s always zucchini bread or relish.

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This column is written by Washington State University/Skagit County certified Master Gardeners. Questions may be submitted to WSU/Skagit County Cooperative Extension, 306 S. First, Mount Vernon, WA 98273-3805.