

VEGETABLES FOR EVERYONE

The How-To Series for Beginners

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

HOW TO:

Harvest & Store Produce from Your Vegetable Garden

The best part of the garden is enjoying what you've grown! Check out this chart to know when to harvest and how to store most common vegetables.



Vegetable	When to Harvest	How to Store
Basil	When leaves are tender. Start with larger leaves first.	Room temperature, stems in water
Beans, snap	When beans are full size, before seeds bulge. Should be crisp and snap easily. Harvest often.	In a bag in the fridge
Beans, lima	When pods and seeds reach full size, before yellowing. Seeds and pods should be fresh, juicy.	In a bag in the fridge
Beets	Eat tops when 4-6" long, or harvest roots when 1-3" in diameter	In a bag in the fridge - best when stored without tops
Broccoli	While flower buds are still tight and green. Cut 6-7" below flower head.	In a bag in the fridge
Brussels sprouts	When sprouts/heads are firm and about 1" in diameter.	In a bag in the fridge
Cabbage	When heads are compact and firm	In a bag in the fridge
Carrots	When roots are 1" in diameter	In a bag in the fridge
Cauliflower	When heads are still white and firm, about 6-7" in diameter. Tie leaves around head when 2-3" to prevent yellowing.	In a bag in the fridge
Corn	Kernels are plump and milky, silks are	In a bag in the fridge
Cucumbers	Pick when 6-9" long, bright and green	In a bag, cool spot in the kitchen. Limited fridge time.

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Vegetable	When to Harvest	How to Store
Eggplant	Harvest when 4-6" in diameter - look for shiny skin	In a bag, cool spot in the kitchen. Limited fridge time
Greens (collards, kale, chard, mustard)	Cut outer leaves when 6-8" long	In a bag in the fridge
Lettuce, head	Pick when heads are moderately firm, about 6" in diameter	In a bag in the fridge
Lettuce, leaf	Pick when leaves are tender. Start with the outside so that plant keeps growing.	In a bag in the fridge
Muskmelon	When fruit slips off vine easily, netting even and fruit is firm	In a bag in the fridge
Onions	When necks are tight and outer leaves are dry	In a cool, dry place
Peas	When pods are still tender	In a bag in the fridge
Peppers	When peppers reach desired size or color	In a bag, cool spot in the kitchen. Limited fridge time.
Potatoes	When the vine dies back.	In a bag in the fridge, keep away from light.
Radishes	Pull up when about 1" in diameter	In a bag in the fridge
Spinach	Leaves are ready when 4-6" long and tender	In a bag in the fridge
Summer squash	Pick when seeds and fruit are small, about 6-8" long with skin you can puncture with a fingernail	In a bag, cool spot in the kitchen. Limited fridge time
Winter squash, pumpkins	Harvest when rind is firm, glossy. Bottom cream to orange color. Pick before first frost.	In a cool, dry place
Tomatoes	When fully colored	In a bag, cool spot in the kitchen. Limited fridge time
Watermelon	When underside turns yellow or fruit produces a dull sound when slapped	In a bag, cool spot in the kitchen. Limited fridge time

Harvesting Tip: When harvesting vegetables, be careful not to break, nick, or bruise them. The less vegetables are handled, the longer they will last in storage. Harvest all vegetables from the garden, and plan to keep the highest quality vegetables in storage. Rotting produce cannot be stored for very long, and could spread disease to other stored vegetables.

References: <https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/harvesting-and-storing-home-garden-vegetables>