

For all produce – Bring a container to the garden for the produce as well as any tools needed, like a clipper, harvest knife or trowel. Keep items out of direct sunlight while picking and move to a cool sheltered place as soon as possible. If “ideal” storage conditions are not possible, use the best conditions available.

Asparagus: Harvest by snapping 10- to 12-inch spears off at ground level. Check every other day. Store in plastic bags in refrigerator for up to 1 week. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Beans, Green: Bean pods will be the most tender when the small seed inside is one-fourth normal size. From this stage, the pods become more fibrous as the beans mature. Store green beans up to 1 week in perforated plastic bags in the warmer part of the refrigerator. Cool cellar storage is also possible. Ideal storage conditions are 45 to 50 degrees F and 80 to 90 percent humidity.

Beets: Begin harvesting when beets are 1 inch in diameter. The main harvest should occur when beets are 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Beet tops make excellent tender greens. For storage, wash roots, trim tops to 1/2 inch, place in perforated plastic bags, and store in refrigerator or cold, moist cellar. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Broccoli: Harvest the terminal head while florets are still tight and of good green color, cutting 3-4 inches below buds. Smaller side shoots will develop for later harvest. Store in perforated bags for up to 1 week in refrigerator. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Brussels Sprouts: Harvest the sprouts (small heads) when they are firm — begin from the bottom of the plant. Sprouts improve in flavor after light frost. Store in the refrigerator in perforated bags for up to 3 weeks. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Cabbage: Harvest when the heads are solid. You can store cabbage in a refrigerator in plastic bags for up to 2 months. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Cantaloupe: Harvest when the stem slips easily from the fruit. Lift the melon. If ripe, it should separate easily. Store ripe melons on the counter for 1-3 days or in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for up to 10 days. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Carrots: Carrots can be harvested by thinning as soon as they are fully colored and large enough to use in salads. For storage, wash roots, trim tops to 1/2 inch, place in perforated plastic bags and store in refrigerator. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Cauliflower: Heads should be white, solid, and close-flowered. To keep white, tie or band outer leaves above the head when curds are forming(except purple types). Cauliflower may be stored in perforated plastic bags in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Cucumber: Harvest cucumbers when they are filled out but not bulging and seeds are undeveloped. Size will vary with variety. Store slicing cucumbers in the warmest part of the refrigerator in a plastic bag. Storage life is about 1 week. Pickling cucumbers should be cooled quickly in ice water and kept up to 2 days in a plastic bag in the refrigerator before pickling. Ideal storage conditions are 45 to 50 degrees F and 80 to 90 percent humidity.

Eggplant: Harvest when fruits are nearly full size, (varies by variety and vigor of the plant), color is still bright and seeds white, if developed. Eggplants can be stored in the warmer part of refrigerator for about a week. Ideal storage conditions are 45 to 50 degrees F and 80 to 90 percent humidity.

Endive (Escarole): Harvest whole plant when center is well filled out. Wash thoroughly to remove soil and sand. Store in plastic bags in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Kale and collard greens: This green may be harvested continuously. Merely break off the outer leaves. Very cold tolerant; flavor improves with light frost. May be stored up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Kohlrabi: Harvest when the swollen stems are 2-3 inches in diameter. Stems become woody if left too long before harvest. Remove root and tough outside leaves; tender leaves can be used like kale. Place in perforated plastic bags and store in refrigerator 1 to 3 weeks. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Lettuce, head: Cut heads in early morning and rinse. Lettuce can be stored up to 2 weeks in perforated plastic bags in the refrigerator. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Onions, Dry: Harvest onions when tops have fallen over and the necks have shriveled. Once dry, remove tops, place in shallow boxes or mesh bags, and cure in open garage or barn for 3 to 4 weeks. Store in mesh bags in a cool place (45 to 50 degrees F and 60 percent humidity).

Onions, Green (Scallions): Harvest green onions when they are 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter. Wash and trim back roots; and any tough ends of green. Place in plastic bags and store in refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Parsnips: Harvest in late fall; flavor improves after light frost. Place in perforated plastic bags and store in refrigerator 1 to 3 weeks. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Peas, shelling and snap: Harvest when peas are full size but pods still bright green. Snow peas: Harvest when pods full size but peas undeveloped. Peas can be kept in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator for about a week. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Peppers, Sweet: Harvest when fruits are firm and full-sized. If ripe fruits are desired, leave on plant until red, yellow or orange color develops. Sweet peppers can be stored for 2 to 3 weeks in the warmer part of the refrigerator in plastic bags. Ideal storage conditions are 45 to 50 degrees F and 80 to 90 percent humidity.

Potatoes: Harvest when the tops have yellowed or died. Do not leave in the ground exposed to high soil temperatures from sun because this will accelerate over-ripening. Remove any that are diseased or damaged. Cure for about a week in a dark, well-ventilated place (barn, shed, garage or spread out in cardboard boxes). Avoid exposing tubers to light; they will turn green with even small amounts of light. Store at in a cool, well-ventilated place; cool basements are probably the best. Storage time is 2 to 4 months. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Pumpkins: Harvest pumpkins and winter squash when skin is hard and the colors darken. Both should be harvested before frost. Cut the fruit from the vine with a portion of the stem attached. Store on shelves in a single layer so air can circulate around them.

Radish: Harvest when 1/2 inch to 1 inch in diameter. Wash roots and trim tap root; tender inside leaves can be cooked. Store in plastic bags in refrigerator for up to 1 month. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Rhubarb: Harvest leaf stalks when 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter. DO NOT USE LEAVES. Rhubarb can be stored in perforated plastic bags for up to 3 weeks in the refrigerator. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Spinach and Mustard greens: Harvest the leaves and leaf stems of greens when they reach suitable size. Either harvest the whole plant or the outer, larger leaves. Wash and trim. Greens do not store well, but may be kept in plastic bags in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Squash, Summer: Harvest when fruit is young and tender; check daily. This is usually when the squash are 6 to 8 inches long or 2 to 3 inches across for pattypan. When blossom withers can be a good indicator of best stage to pick. Can be stored for up to a week in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator. Ideal storage is 45 to 50 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Squash, Winter: Harvest pumpkins and winter squash when skin is hard and the colors darken. Both should be harvested before frost. Remove the fruit from the vine with a portion of the stem attached. Store on shelves in a single layer so air can circulate around them.

Sweet Corn: Harvest sweet corn when kernels are plump and tender. Silks will be dry and husks filled. Check a few ears for maturity: open top of ear, press a few kernels with thumbnail. If milky juices exudes, it is ready for harvest. Check every other day. Sweet corn has a very short storage life. Harvest at peak quality, husk to conserve space, and store in plastic bags for no more than 2 days in the refrigerator. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Swiss Chard: This green may be harvested continuously as needed. Merely break off the outer leaves. Swiss chard is a beet developed for its top. A spring planting will provide greens from early summer through winter. May be stored up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Tomatoes: Ripe tomato color and softness varies by variety. Pick when fully colored but still firm. Some older varieties must be clipped from the vines. Check every 3-4 days. Flavor decreases with refrigeration. Store ripe tomatoes at 50 to 70 degrees F. Green, mature tomatoes, harvested in late fall, should be kept between 55 and 70 degrees F from 3 to 5 weeks by wrapping each tomato in newspaper and inspecting for ripeness every few days.

Turnips and Rutabagas: Harvest baby turnips at 1 to 2 inches; larger ones and rutabagas at 2 to 3 inches. Very large or old specimens may be pithy and have strong flavor. Tender mustard greens can be cooked. They are a good fall crop; flavor improves with light frost. For storage, clip the tops 1-2 inches above the root, place in perforated plastic bags and store in refrigerator. Ideal storage is 32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent humidity.

Watermelon: Harvest when the underside of fruit turns whitish to yellowish. The tendril at the juncture of the fruit stem and the vine usually dies when the fruit is mature. Thumping an immature melon gives a ringing metallic sound, while a mature melon gives a dull thud. Check every 2 to 3 days. Watermelons will store at room temperature for about a week; at temperatures of 45 to 50 degrees F for 2 or 3 weeks.