

Tips for Gardeners

Harvesting Vegetables



Tips on Harvesting Vegetables

Snap Beans: Harvest while tender and before seed cause the pods to bulge. Pick frequently and chill immediately.

Irish Potatoes: Dig any time they reach sufficient size (usually 90-120 days from planting). Yield is reduced and storage quality lowered by harvesting tubers too early. The tops die down when approaching maturity. Rub thumb over a few of the larger tubers to test for maturity. If they skin easily or feather, the tubers are not mature and will not keep as well in storage as mature ones. Store Irish potatoes in a cool, dark place. Save smaller potatoes for seed this fall.

Sweet Corn: Harvest when the kernels are in the milk stage. Test a few kernels with the thumbnail. If the liquid inside the kernel is clear and watery, it is immature; if it has turned to dough, it is overmature; if the liquid is milky, it is at its best. "High sugar" types will have a more watery kernel when mature. A mature ear ready to harvest will feel full, and the silks will have dried and turned dark. Chill ears immediately after harvest, and consume or process as soon as possible.

Summer Squash: Harvest while young and tender. You should be able to puncture easily or scratch the rind of the fruit with the thumbnail. Remove oversized fruit to encourage new flower and fruit development. Store freshly harvested squash in the refrigerator.

Cucumber: Harvest cucumber while fruit are young and tender. A yellowish skin indicates fruit is past the best edible stage. Harvest frequently, and remove oversized fruit to encourage new flower and fruit development. Store in refrigerator.

Tomatoes: Pick firm, red fruit. Pick at least twice a week. Store in cool place, but don't refrigerate until fully ripe and ready to eat. Fruit that have begun to turn pink on the blossom end will ripen when removed from the vine.

Bell Peppers: Harvest after reaching full size and after the fruit becomes firm. Mature peppers will easily snap when lightly lifted.

Eggplant: Harvest eggplants at any stage after they reach 1/3 of their normal mature size. A good fruit has a high gloss or sheen to its skin. Fruit in which the seed have turned brown are pas te best eating stage.

Field Peas or Southern Peas: Pods should be plump. The purple hulled varieties should show about 50% purple on the pod. Green hulled varieties should show slight yellowing on the pod.

Lima or Butter Beans: Pods are ready to harvest when seeds are 3/4 their full size or when pods can be shelled easily, but before the pods show any yellowing.

Cantaloupes: Harvest at "full slip", that is, when the stem separates readily from the fruit with only slight pressure, leaving a clean stem scar on the fruit. Fruit picked when immature will not increase in sweetness, even though texture may improve some.

Watermelons: Experience is important in knowing when to harvest watermelons at the proper stage of ripeness. A ripe fruit will give a dull, flat sound when thumped; a green unripe fruit will give a crisp metallic sound. The most reliable sign is that the ground spot will change from white to light yellow

Miscellaneous

Recommended distance between plants in inches:

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| Snap beans - bush | 2-3 |
| Snap beans - pole | 6-12 |
| Beets | 3-4 |
| Broccoli | 6-18 |
| Cabbage | 12-15 |
| Cauliflower | 12-18 |
| Carrots | 2-3 |
| Bell pepper | 12-18 |
| Celery | 6-8 |
| Collards | 6-12 |
| Sweet corn | 8-12 |
| Lettuce - head | 12 |
| Okra | 6-12 |
| Onions | 3-4 |
| English peas | 2-3 |
| Irish potatoes | 12 |
| Shallots | 6 |
| Sweet potatoes | 12 |
| Tomatoes | 18-24 |