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Seed to Supper

A beginner's guide to low-cost vegetable gardening



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Chapter 6: Harvesting and using your bounty

It is harvest time! This chapter tells you how to harvest, store, and use all the different crops you can grow in your garden. It ends with some simple, delicious recipes for cooking the vegetables you harvested.

Gardening for your health

Can your garden help you enjoy a healthy, active lifestyle? Yes, it can! ChooseMyPlate.gov, which replaced the Food Pyramid in 2011, recommends filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest that we should increase our intake of fruits and vegetables, and eat them in greater variety. According to the Guidelines, just 2½ cups of vegetables a day can help to reduce your risk of heart disease, and some fruits and vegetables may protect against cancer.

Eating a rainbow from your garden

The color of a fruit or vegetable tells you about the nutrients it contains, and it can help you make smart decisions about what to eat. When you eat fruits and vegetables in a variety of colors (“eat a rainbow”), you get a healthy mix of vitamins and nutrients.

TOPICS IN THIS CHAPTER

Gardening for your health

Crop-by-crop guide to harvest, storage and nutrition

Cooking from your garden



ChooseMyPlate.gov recommends filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables.

Calories and fiber

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend eating less high-calorie food and eating more low-calorie, nutrient-rich food like fruits and vegetables. High-calorie foods like pizza and baked goods provide you with less nutrients for every calorie you eat. Most of the crops you grow in your garden are also good sources of dietary fiber. Fiber helps you feel full and keeps your digestion regular.

*“Eating a rainbow”
—or eating fruits and vegetables of a
variety of colors—
can help you get a healthy mix of essen-
tial vitamins and
nutrients into your diet.*

Eat a rainbow from your garden Color-by-color health benefits of common garden vegetables	
Red	Orange & Yellow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A healthy heart • Memory function • A lower risk of some cancers • Urinary tract health <p><i>Examples: Tomatoes, peppers & beets</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A healthy heart • Vision health • A healthy immune system • A lower risk of some cancers <p><i>Examples: Carrots, winter & summer squash</i></p>
Green	White, Tan & Brown
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lower risk of some cancers • Vision health • Strong bones and teeth <p><i>Examples: Kale, chard, collards & peas</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A healthy heart • A lower risk of some cancers • Maintains healthy cholesterol levels <p><i>Examples: Onions, garlic, parsnips & potatoes</i></p>
Blue and Purple	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lower risk of some cancers • Urinary tract health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory function • Healthy aging
<p><i>Examples: Eggplant, purple carrots & purple peppers</i></p>	

Some information in this chapter reprinted with permission from Robbins, J., W. Colt., and M. Raidl. 2003. Harvesting and Storing Fresh Garden Vegetables. Bulletin 617. University of Idaho Extension, Moscow.



Crop-by-crop guide to harvest, storage and nutrition

In this section you will find basic information about 30 common garden crops, listed in alphabetical order. You will find information about when to harvest, how to harvest, and what each crop should look like when it is ready to pick. You will also find tips on preparing and storing food as well as nutrition facts and recipes.

Harvesting for freshness

At the moment of harvest, your garden produce is at the peak of its quality, nutritional value, and flavor. To get the most out of your garden, try to harvest only what you need for a meal and use it right away. Freeze, can, or dry what you can't eat.

Harvest in the morning when the vegetables are cool and will take handling better. Try not to bruise or damage your harvest because it will spoil more quickly. Keep the food you just picked out of direct sunlight and use it or store it as soon as possible.

Basil

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Wait until basil leaves are about 3 to 6 inches long and rich green or purple, depending on variety. Basil plants grow and produce leaves all summer, and picking encourages more growth. Harvest by picking a few leaves from each plant instead of all the leaves from one plant.

When flowers appear, pinch off the top 3 or 4 sets of leaves to remove the flowers. Getting rid of the flowers helps the plant send its energy into the leaves. Use the leaves that you pinched off as part of your harvest.

How to use and store: Basil is best right after harvest. Eat the leaves whole or chopped, and use them fresh, sautéed, or baked in many summer meals.

Store fresh basil with its stems in a cup of water (like cut flowers) for up to 7 days. Cover the basil with a plastic bag with holes poked in it, and keep it out of direct sunlight. Store basil leaves in a dry, airtight plastic bag in your refrigerator for several days. At the end of the season, you can hang whole basil plants upside down to dry. Blend fresh basil leaves with vegetable oil, freeze in ziplock bags, and use a little at a time in fall and winter as a cooking oil. Pesto, a green sauce made from basil, garlic, nuts, cheese, and oil, can be pre-made, and frozen in ice cube trays. Pop out the frozen pesto cubes and store them in a ziplock bag in the freezer for later use. For best flavor, add the cheese only after thawing.

Nutrition facts: There is just 1 calorie in 2 teaspoons of chopped basil. Basil has small amounts of vitamins A and K, niacin, folic acid, and fiber.

Beans- Snap (bush or pole)

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Snap beans (also called green beans) come in various colors, shapes, and sizes. In general, snap beans are ready to pick when they are about as thick as a pencil and before the pods fill out. Harvest by holding the plant with one hand and pulling the beans off with the other hand.

Pick often to encourage the plant to produce more beans. Look carefully to

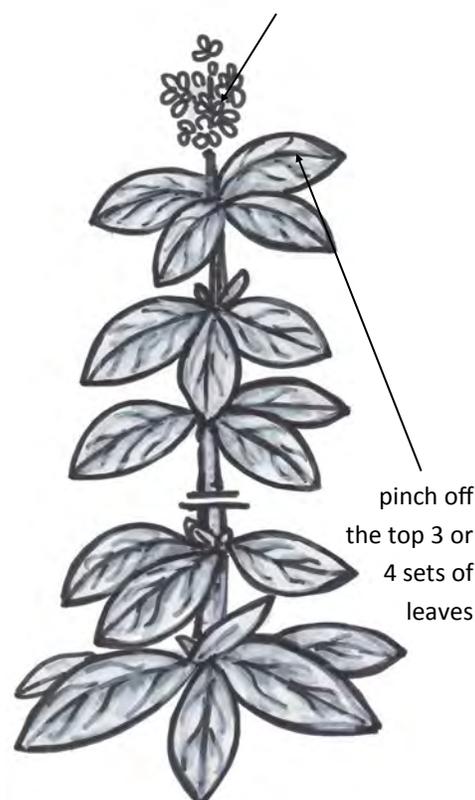


Courtesy of Yannic Meyer via Flickr

Make Pesto!

Make your own Italian herb paste by putting basil leaves, garlic, pine nuts, parmesan cheese, and olive oil into a blender. It makes for a delicious dip, spread, or seasoning.

As flowers begin to appear





Harvest snap beans when they are as thick as a pencil.



Courtesy of Scott Zona via flickr

Chinese Yard-long Beans

They are best grown in the summer time when the soil is nice and warm. Plant them along a fence or tie them on a trellis to climb up. Harvest length is between 12 and 18 inches long! Packed with vitamin A, these beans are commonly found in Chinese and other Asian cuisines.

find beans that are hiding underneath leaves. If you miss some beans and the pods get full, you can still pick them and eat the soft beans inside. If the pods have dried out, you can shell them and keep the dry beans for replanting next year. Beans are also great pickled or dehydrated for soup mixes!

How to use and store: You can eat snap beans fresh, steamed, boiled, sautéed, or baked. Also use them in soups, salads, and stir-fries. Store snap beans in a plastic bag in your refrigerator for 7 to 10 days.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked snap beans contains 22 calories and 2 grams of fiber. Snap beans are a good source of vitamin C.

Beans – dried (pinto beans, black beans)

When to harvest: September-October

How to harvest: Harvest when bean pods are dry and tan. If the fall weather is wet, harvest as soon as they turn tan so the pods don't mold. Pick into paper bags or boxes and they will continue to dry indoors.

How to use and store: Store in paper bags or open boxes and shell beans as needed. Soak beans overnight, drain soaking water and cook in fresh water. Bring the cooking liquid to a boil and simmer for approximately an hour until the beans are soft.

Nutritional facts: ½ cup cooked black or pinto beans contain 330 calories and 41 grams of protein.

Beets (roots and greens)

When to harvest: June–March

How to harvest: Pick beet greens just like chard (a cousin of beets). Harvest the leaves one at a time when they are 4 to 6 inches long, and leave the root in the ground to harvest later.

Beet roots are ready to harvest when the “shoulders,” or top part of the root, stick out above the soil. You can wait to harvest beets until they reach the size you want. The roots can range from golf ball to grapefruit size. Smaller beets are tender and flavorful, while larger beets are usually tougher and more fibrous. The root should be firm and dark, with a smooth surface. To harvest, hold the area where the leaves meet the root and pull gently. You can also use a shovel or hand trowel to dig around and below the beet to loosen the soil. It is easiest to harvest beets when the soil is slightly damp.

How to use and store: Eat beet roots raw, roasted, baked, boiled, steamed, or microwaved. Use them in salads, soups, and roasts. Red varieties add bright



Beets are ready for harvest when their “shoulders” stick out above the soil line.



color to a meal, but be aware that the red color can stain. Use beet greens the same way you use spinach and chard.

Unless you plan to use beet roots right after harvest, do not wash them. Just brush the dirt off and let them dry slightly before storing. You can store beets with greens still attached in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 weeks. Beets with the greens cut off will last for 3 to 5 months in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Wash the beet roots just before using them. Store unwashed beet greens in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Beets make tasty chips when dehydrated, and are also great pickled.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked beet root contains 110 calories, 1.5 grams of fiber, and small amounts of iron, vitamin C, and folate. ½ cup cooked beet greens contains 19 calories and 2 grams of fiber. The greens are an excellent source of vitamins A and C.

Broccoli

When to harvest: June–November (overwintered varieties, February–May)

How to harvest: Harvest broccoli heads when they are tight, compact, and blue-greenish. Be sure to harvest before the small yellow flower buds appear. The yellow flowers are edible, but they mean that the broccoli is bolting (going to seed). Harvest by cutting the stalk 5 to 6 inches below the head.

Broccoli will continue to send out smaller side shoots for several weeks after you cut off the central head. Harvest these smaller stalks by cutting them off several inches from the main stalk.

How to use and store: Enjoy broccoli raw, roasted, steamed, boiled, microwaved, or baked. Use it in soups, stews, casseroles, and salads. It also makes a great snack or side dish. Broccoli stems and leaves are nutritious and tasty, so eat them too!

Broccoli head and side-shoots



Central head



Side shoots coming up after head is cut

Broccoli tastes best when it is kept cool. Harvest it early in the morning and store it in a plastic bag in the refrigerator right away. It will keep in the refrigerator for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked broccoli contains 22 calories and 2 grams of fiber. Broccoli is an excellent source of vitamins C and A and a good source of folate.

Cabbage

When to harvest: July–November (summer-planted varieties, November–April)

How to harvest: Harvest cabbage any time after the head develops. A head of cabbage can range from softball to soccer ball size, depending on variety and maturity. Green cabbage tends to have milder flavor than earthier red cabbage, but green cabbage gets sweeter when cooked. For best flavor, harvest cabbage heads when they are compact and feel firm, before they begin to split open. Harvest by cutting the stem as close to the head as possible with clippers or a sharp knife.

Broccoli will continue to send out smaller side shoots from the main stem for several weeks after the central head has been cut.

Depending upon variety and maturity, a head of cabbage can range from softball to soccer ball size.



Courtesy of Billy Cox

After you harvest the head, “cabbage sprouts” (like Brussels sprouts) will grow at the base of each remaining leaf. The sprouts are ready to harvest when they feel firm and are 2 to 4 inches wide. Harvest by cutting or twisting the sprouts free of the stalk.

How to use and store: Enjoy cabbage raw, steamed, boiled, sautéed, roasted, baked, or pickled. Use it in salads, soups, and stews, and for pickling into sauerkraut and kimchi.

Like broccoli, cabbage tastes best when it is kept cool. Harvest early in the morning, wrap the head in a plastic bag or plastic wrap, and put it in the refrigerator right away. Cabbage picked in summer and early fall will keep for 3 to 6 weeks. Cabbage picked in the colder months will keep 3 to 4 months.

Nutrition facts: 1 cup chopped raw cabbage contains 22 calories and 2 grams of fiber. Cabbage is an excellent source of vitamin C.

Carrots

When to harvest: July–November

How to harvest: You can begin harvesting carrots when they reach about ½ inch wide. Keep harvesting for 3 to 4 more weeks as they grow. Carrots planted in summer are frost hardy and will keep growing when an early frost is followed by warmer weather.

Carrots get sweeter as they grow, but they can become bitter and woody if they get too large and begin to split. To harvest carrots, use one hand to hold the leaves close to the base and wiggle and pull the carrot. Use your other hand to loosen the soil next to the root with a hand trowel or other digging tool. Loosening the soil will help you avoid breaking the top off the carrot. It is easier to harvest carrots when the soil is damp.

How to use and store: Enjoy carrots raw, boiled, sautéed, roasted, or steamed.

Cut off the green tops and place the carrots in a plastic bag or crisper drawer in the refrigerator. Properly stored carrots will keep for 4 to 6 months. Carrots can also be blanched and frozen or dehydrated for soups and carrot chips!

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked carrots contains 35 calories and 2.5 grams of fiber. Carrots are an excellent source of vitamin A.

Cauliflower

When to harvest: May–June and September–November (overwintered varieties, March–June)

How to harvest: Cauliflower is ready to harvest when the head is about 6 to 8 inches wide and the “curd” (the bumpy top part of the head) is firm, smooth, and compact. Be sure to harvest before the curd begins to separate. When the curd separates, the head will look a little like rice.

Harvest cauliflower by cutting the main stem just below the head. Leave a few green leaves around the head for freshness.

How to use and store: Enjoy cauliflower raw, steamed, roasted, boiled, or sautéed. Use it in soups, stews, and curries, and as a raw snack on a veggie platter. Boil and mash cauliflower to make a tasty, low-carb replacement for mashed potatoes.

Like cabbage and broccoli, cauliflower stores best when it is harvested early in the morning and cooled right away. Cauliflower will keep for 2 to 4 weeks in plastic wrap or in the crisper drawer in the refrigerator.



Cut the green tops off your carrots before storing in the refrigerator.



Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked cauliflower contains 14 calories and 1.7 grams of fiber. Cauliflower is an excellent source of vitamin C.

Chard (Swiss chard)

When to harvest: May–December (year-round in mild-winter areas)

How to harvest: Chard leaves can be eaten at any size. When you thin chard seedlings to make space for the crop to grow, use the thinnings as “baby chard.” When you pick leaves from a mature plant, use the cut-and-come-again method to make your harvest last longer. Cut the largest leaves from the outside of each plant about 1 1/2 inches from the main stalk, and let the inner leaves keep growing. Mature plants grow about 1 to 2 feet tall and can keep producing for several months. Chard becomes tougher and more fibrous as it ages. If you prefer tender greens, begin harvesting when leaves are about 8 to 12 inches long.

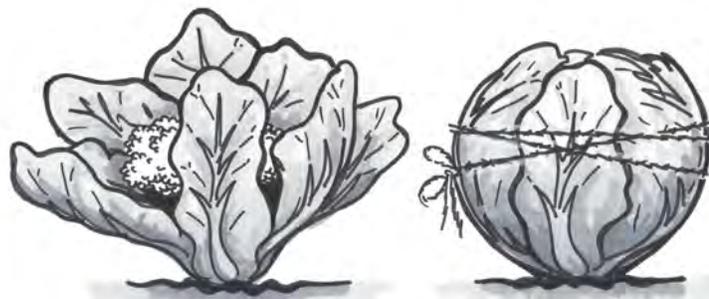
How to use and store: Mature chard leaves have two edible parts: the tender greens and the more fibrous stems. The greens cook quickly and are delicious raw, sautéed, or added to omelets, soups, stews, lasagnas, and gratins. Use them as you would spinach or beet greens. The stems take a bit longer to cook. Enjoy them steamed, sautéed, boiled, or roasted. Use them as you would celery or asparagus. To separate the stem from the leaf, use a knife to cut the leaf away or strip it off with your thumb and pointer finger.

Chard is very perishable. It tastes best fresh, so try to harvest only what you need for your meal. If you harvest more than you can eat right away, store it unwashed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. It will last for 2 to 3 days.

Nutrition facts: 1 cup raw chard contains 7 calories and 0.6 grams of fiber. Chard is an excellent source of vitamin A and a good source of vitamin C.

Cilantro, coriander

When to harvest: May–June and September–October (coriander seeds, August–September)



How to harvest: Cilantro plants can produce both an herb and a spice. The leaves (herb) are called cilantro. The seeds (spice) are called coriander. If you want cilantro leaves, begin harvesting when the plant is about 6 inches tall. Use scissors to cut close to the ground. Use the cut-and-come-again method to harvest bright green leaves from the outside of the plant.

When the temperature warms to about 75°F, the plant starts to bolt (go to seed). As the plant sends up a tall flower stalk and puts its energy into making seeds, the leaves become less tasty. Harvest coriander seeds when the plant begins to turn brown and the flowers have become little round seeds. Be sure to harvest before any seeds burst open. Cut the whole plant and hang it upside down in a paper bag. Shake the bag once in a while to loosen the seeds. After several weeks, you will need to “thresh” the dry seeds by beating them in the paper bag or rubbing them between your fingers. Threshing separates the inner seeds from the hard outer shells (the “chaff”).

How to use and store: Use chopped or whole cilantro leaves to add a fresh, zesty flavor to your meal. Sprinkle the leaves on salads, stir-fries, or meat dishes. Blend the leaves into guacamole, salsa, or pesto, or cook it into sauces and soups.

Like most herbs, cilantro tastes best just after harvest, so try to pick only what you need for your meal. If you harvest more than you can use, place the stems in a cup of water (like cut flowers).

“Blanch” cauliflower to make it bright white. When the head is about 2 to 3 inches wide, tie the leaves over the head and leave them tied until harvest

Use the cut-and-come-again method to extend your chard harvest. Cut the outside leaves and let the inside leaves grow.



Cilantro plants can produce both an herb and a spice. The leaves (herb) are called cilantro, and the seeds (spice) are called coriander.



Courtesy of Jason Bachman via flickr



Recaito

Used as an herb blend in Latin Caribbean cuisine, recaito is a popular base seasoning sauce for many dishes. It is traditionally made with cilantro, onion, garlic, and green peppers. Chop up all of the ingredients, or use a food processor until it's well blended. Store in the fridge or freezer.

Use coriander seeds to flavor Indian and Middle Eastern dishes, omelets, rice, pickles, casseroles, burgers, and baked goods. First, toast the seeds in a dry pan without any oil, and grind the toasted seeds with a mortar and pestle.

Store coriander seeds whole without toasting or grinding them. Be sure the seeds are dry before you store them. Keep them in an airtight container in a cupboard or other cool, dark, dry place.

Spices lose flavor over time, but whole coriander seeds should be good for 1 to 2 years when they are stored properly.

Nutrition facts: ¼ cup cilantro leaves contains 1 calorie and 0.1 grams of fiber. Cilantro is an excellent source of vitamin K and a good source of vitamin A.



Courtesy of ebarney via flickr

Collard greens: Cut the tough stem away from the tender leaf and cook separately.

Collard greens (collards)

When to harvest: July–December (in mild weather, collards can overwinter through early spring)

How to harvest: Collards are a nutritious, hardy crop that keeps growing in the colder months. All aboveground parts of collard plants are edible at any stage of growth. For smaller, tender greens, grow collards close together and harvest when the plants are 6 to 10 inches tall. Harvest by pulling up the entire plant and clipping off the roots. For an extended harvest, wait until the plants are 10 to 12 inches tall. Then begin harvesting larger, older leaves from the outside of the plant using the cut-and-come-again method. For the best flavor, harvest in the cool of the morning or after a light frost.

Overwintered collards produce broccoli-like florets, called “collard raab” in spring. Harvest collard raab by cutting the florets where they meet the stalk. Be sure to do it before yellow flower petals emerge. Leave the central stalk in place and the plant will continue to produce florets for several weeks.

How to use and store: Collards are a hardy, sweet green that you can use in the same ways you use chard or kale. Like chard, mature collards have a fibrous, edible stem that takes a bit longer to cook. Strip the stem from the leaf with a knife. Enjoy collards chopped or sliced and added to soups, omelets, pastas, and even smoothies. Try collards steamed, braised in broth, stir-fried, used as a wrap with a filling inside, or eaten raw.

Place collard greens in a plastic bag and store them for 10 to 14 days in the refrigerator.

Nutrition facts: 1 cup chopped raw collards contains 11 calories and 1.3 grams of fiber. Collards are an excellent source of vitamins A and C and a good source of folate.



Corn (sweet corn)

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Corn is ready for harvest about 20 days after the first silk strands poke out from the ear. The tip of the ear should feel flat and not pointed. The kernels should be plump. Use a fingernail to pierce a kernel a few rows down from the top to see if there is milky liquid inside. But if you can, avoid peeling the leaves away from the ear until you are ready to cook the corn. This will help preserve flavor.

To harvest an ear of corn, hold it with one hand and twist until it comes loose from the stalk.

How to use and store: Enjoy corn raw or cooked in salads and soups, and use it in baked dishes. Cook corn on the cob or cut the kernels off the cob before or after cooking.

Corn tastes best just after harvest, but it will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 2 to 10 days.

Whole ears of corn as well as individual kernels can be blanched and frozen. Kernels can be dehydrated for soups.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked corn contains 89 calories and 2.3 grams of fiber. Corn is a good source of thiamin.

Cucumbers

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: There are many cucumber varieties. Harvest size and color depend on the variety you are growing. Be sure to check your seed packet for harvesting information. In general, cucumbers are ready when the fruit is firm, bright, and green, with no dullness or yellowing, and before the seeds begin to harden. Harvest slicing cucumbers when they are 6 to 8 inches long. Harvest pickling cucumbers when they are 2 to 6 inches long. Harvest lemon cucumbers, a round cucumber variety, when the skin is firm and light green with a hint of yellow. Cucumbers become seedy and bitter as they get bigger, so harvest early and often.



Courtesy of USAID via Flickr

Corn is ready for harvest about 20 days after the first silk strands appear.

To pick a cucumber, support it with your hand while you clip the stem about ¼ inch above the fruit. Clipping will help prevent damage to the fruit or the vine. Harvest every day or so. If you leave cucumbers on the vine, your plant

will stop producing. Clip off any stunted, rotten, or browning fruit to help the plant direct its energy to producing healthy fruit.

How to use and store: Enjoy slicing cucumbers and lemon cucumbers in salads and as fresh snacks. Also try them juiced, chopped into sauces and salsas, pureed into cold soups (gazpacho), and stir-fried. As the name suggests, pickling cucumbers make great pickles!

Store cucumbers in plastic wrap or in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup raw cucumber contains 15 calories and 0.4 grams of fiber. Cucumbers contain small amounts of vitamin C and folate.

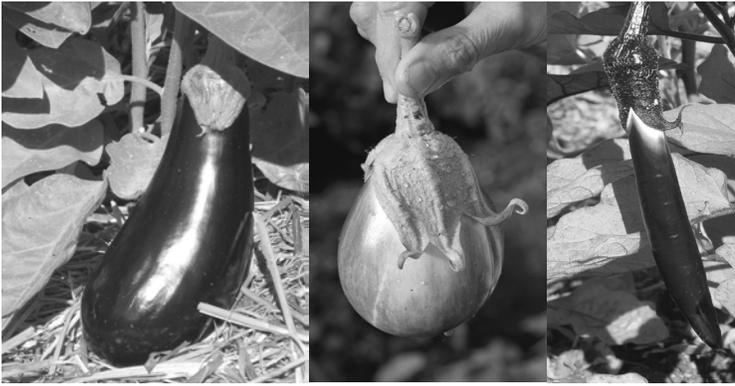
Eggplant

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: The size, shape, and color of a ripe eggplant depends on which variety you are growing. Read your plant tag or check in a seed catalog for information about your variety before you harvest. In general, a ripe eggplant should be glossy and firm with only a slight give when you press it with your thumb. Fruits picked on the smaller side taste best.



Cucumbers become seedy and bitter as they get bigger, so harvest early and often.



Eggplant types vary in size, color, and shape.

To harvest an eggplant, hold the fruit while you clip it from the plant close to the stalk. To keep the harvest going all summer, harvest ripe eggplant fruits early and often.

How to use and store: Enjoy eggplant grilled, roasted, stuffed, or stewed. Mix it into soups, curries, casseroles, stir-fries, pasta dishes, and dips. Raw eggplant can cause digestive upset, so it is best to cook it. Keep eggplant wrapped in plastic in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked eggplant contains 14 calories and 1.2 grams of fiber. Eggplant contains small amounts of folate, vitamin C, and iron.



Courtesy of USDA via flickr

Roasted Eggplant Dip

Also called Baba Ghanoush, simply blend roasted eggplants, parsley, tahini, olive oil, and a squeezed lemon into a blender or food processor and refrigerate. This is an easy and delicious Levantine dip to make for social gatherings!

After curing your garlic, trim the roots close to the bulb with scissors and wipe off loose dirt with a dry cloth.

Garlic

When to harvest: June–July for mature storage bulbs (garlic scapes, May–June; green garlic, March–May)

How to harvest: After overwintering in the garden, garlic leaves begin to turn yellow and dry out in early summer as the bulb reaches maturity. Garlic bulbs are mature and ready for storage when half of the leaves have turned yellow and half remain green. “Green garlic” (immature garlic) can be harvested throughout springtime, but it does not store well. To harvest mature or green garlic, use a digging fork, shovel, or hand trowel to loosen the soil around the garlic. Be careful not to damage the bulb. Hold the leaves close to the bulb and wiggle until the bulb comes loose from the soil.

“Hardneck” garlic varieties send up an edible curly flower stalk called a garlic scape. Harvest the scape while it is still green, before the flower opens. Clip the scape off close to where it meets the leaves and leave the bulb in the ground until it matures.

How to use and store: Garlic adds flavor to meals without adding fat or salt. Use it to flavor soups, stews, casseroles, pasta sauces, salad dressings, curries, roasts, and marinades. Garlic gets sweet and creamy when you roast it. Roast whole heads of garlic and spread on crackers.

Garlic bulbs will store for 6 to 7 months when cured properly. To cure garlic, shake any loose soil off the bulb and lay it flat with its leaves still attached in a dry place out of direct sunlight for 3 to 6 weeks. After curing, trim off the roots close to the bulb with scissors, and wipe loose dirt from the bulb with a dry cloth. Be careful not to remove the outer layer of skin from the bulb. If you accidentally remove any skin, use that garlic first because it will not



store well. "Softneck" varieties have flexible leaves. You can clip off the tops to 1 inch above the bulb or braid the leaves together. "Hardneck" varieties have stiff leaves and are hard to braid. Clip the tops to 1 inch above the bulb. Always store garlic in a dark space with good air circulation.

Nutrition facts: 1 clove of garlic contains 5 calories and no fat, sodium, or cholesterol. Scientific studies suggest that garlic may lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Herbs (perennial)

When to harvest: Year-round, varies

How to harvest: You can begin harvesting small amounts of leaves as soon as your herb transplants establish themselves. You can harvest most perennial herbs at any time of year. Both the leaves and flowers of chives are edible and can be picked anytime. Culinary sage, mint, oregano, rosemary, sweet marjoram, thyme, and winter savory are most flavorful when harvested just as their flower buds begin to appear but before they bloom.

Use scissors or clippers to harvest herbs. Snip just below a pair of leaves, leaving 4 to 6 inches of stem below for new growth. Harvest chives by cutting just above ground level. You can harvest just what you need for a meal, or you can harvest heavily for drying and storage. As a general rule, do not harvest more than one-third of the plant at once.

How to use and store: Herbs add flavor and depth to meals without adding fat or salt. Use sage to flavor meatloaf, stews, and bean dishes. Try mint on meats, in salads, and as a tea. Use oregano, marjoram, savory, and thyme to flavor soups, pastas, pizzas, and roasts. Enjoy chives in salads and egg dishes. Dry herbs are stronger than fresh herbs. If you are following a recipe that calls for dried herbs and you are using fresh, just use a little more of the fresh herb.

Fresh herbs will keep for up to 1 week in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, but it is best to harvest only what you need for a meal. Herbs can also be dried and then stored in airtight containers away from light and heat. You can air-dry them in a warm, dark place for several weeks, oven-dry them at no higher than 180°F for 4

hours, or microwave-dry them on high for 1 to 3 minutes.

Nutrition facts: Herbs are low-calorie, low-sodium, fat-free foods.

Kale

When to harvest: Year-round

How to harvest: Kale can be smooth, bumpy, curly, or lacy and frosty green to deep purple, depending on the variety. It is a cold-hardy crop that will grow all year, but cold weather improves the flavor. Kale is best when planted in late summer and harvested in the colder months. The leaves are edible at any stage of growth. For an extended harvest, use the cut-and-come-again method. Harvest the outer leaves while they are still tender and about 8 inches long or less. To pick kale, clip or twist the base of the leaves closest to the stalk. You can also harvest the entire plant at any time by pulling it up by the roots and clipping off the leaves. For best flavor, harvest in early morning or after a frost.

How to use and store: You can eat kale raw or cooked. Mature kale leaves have a thick stem that takes longer to cook. Strip it out and cook it separately. Cut the leaves into strips and steam them, or massage them with oil and salt to soften. Mix kale into salads, pastas, soups, stews, bean dishes, and stir-fries. Blend it into smoothies and juices. Bake it into kale chips (see the recipe on page 78).



Courtesy of Kate Haskell via flickr

Herbs add flavor and depth to your meals without adding fat or salt.

For more information

Tips for gardening, overwintering and drying herbs

Available at:

http://blogs.cornell.edu/cceherkimer/files/2009/04/2011_handy_ref_dry_veg.pdf



Mature kale can be smooth, bumpy, curly, or lacy. Kale can range in color from frosty green to deep purple.

Lettuce

When to harvest: April–November

How to harvest: Harvesting depends on whether you are growing “leaf” lettuce or “head” lettuce. Pick leaf lettuce at any stage of growth. Wait to harvest head lettuce until it forms a tight, compact head. Lettuce grows best in spring and fall weather. It tends to bolt (send up a flower stalk) in hot summer weather, which makes it bitter and much less tasty. For all lettuce varieties, be sure to harvest before the plant bolts.

Use the cut-and-come-again method to harvest leaf lettuce. Snip a few of the outer leaves about 1 inch above the ground. The center leaves will keep growing, and you can harvest more every week or so. Harvest head lettuce by removing the whole plant. Clip the bottom of the plant at soil level or pull the plant up by the roots.

How to use and store: Use lettuce in salads and sandwiches. Wrap a lettuce leaf around cold cuts. Shred lettuce and use it to top tacos and bean dishes. Try something new: Include lettuce in a smoothie, brush lettuce leaves with olive oil and grill them, or blend lettuce into a cold summer soup.

Lettuce tastes best fresh from the garden, but you can store it in plastic wrap in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 weeks.

Nutrition facts: 1 cup raw shredded lettuce contains 7 calories and less than 1 gram of fiber. Lettuce also contains small amounts of vitamins C and A.



To grow tender, white stems, blanch leeks by mounding soil around the base of the plants as they grow.

Wrap kale in a plastic bag and store it in the refrigerator for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition facts: 1 cup chopped raw kale contains 34 calories and 1.3 grams of fiber. Kale is an excellent source of vitamins C and A.

Leeks

When to harvest: August–November (overwintered varieties, February–May)

How to harvest: A leek is like a long onion without a bulb and with flat leaves. Leeks withstand freezing temperatures and can grow year-round. They are ready for harvest when the base of the stem is 1 to 2 inches wide.

Dig leeks by pushing a digging fork, shovel, or hand trowel straight down next to the plant. Hold the leek with one hand and use the tool to loosen the soil until the leek comes up.

Growing tip: “Blanch” leeks to make more of the stem edible. When the stem is about as thick as a pencil, mound soil up to the level of the first leaves. Any part of the leek that is hidden from sunlight will be white and tender.

How to use and store: Leeks are milder than onions or garlic. You can eat them raw or cooked. First, rinse them very well because they collect soil between their layers. Leeks are a good substitute for onions in recipes that take a long time to cook. They are especially good in soups and stews.

Leeks will store for 1 to 3 months in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Wipe the soil away, then cut off the roots and the top, leaving just 1 to 2 inches of green leaves.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked leeks contains 16 calories and 0.5 grams of fiber. Leeks also contain small amounts of iron and vitamin C.



Onions

When to harvest: August–November (overwintered varieties, July)

How to harvest: Harvest onions anytime during their growing season to use right away. You can also harvest at the end of the season for storage. Onions come in white, yellow, red, and purple varieties. “Green onions” (also called “spring onions”) are onions that you harvest before they reach maturity. When you thin your onion bed in spring, eat the thinnings as green onions. In general, harvest green onions when the tops are about as thick as a pencil. When mature onions are ready to harvest, their tops fall over. When a quarter or more of the tops have fallen, pull all the onions out of the ground within a week. Onions that have “bolted” (sent up a flower stalk) do not taste good.

To harvest green or mature onions, use a digging fork or hand trowel to loosen the soil around the roots. Hold the top of the plant with your hand and gently pull the onion loose from the soil.

How to use and store: Cooked onions add flavor to soups, stews, roasts, stir-fries, and omelets. Use raw onions in salads, sandwiches, salsas, and wraps.

Use green onions soon after harvest. They will keep in the refrigerator for only up to 1 week.

To store mature onions, you must cure them first. Right after harvest, lay them flat with their leaves still attached in a dark place at room temperature (60° to 80°F) for 10 to 14 days. When the leaves have dried, cut the tops off 1 to 3 inches above the bulb. Trim off the roots, and dust off any loose soil. Do not rinse the onions in water or remove the outer skin. Store the onions in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place, like a pantry, for up to 8 months.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked onion contains 46 calories and 1.5 grams of fiber. Onions also contain small amounts of vitamin C, calcium, and iron.

Parsley

When to harvest: Year-round

How to harvest: Two types of parsley are common in home gardens: curly parsley and Italian parsley (also called “flat leaf” parsley). Begin harvesting both types once the plants are well established or when the outer stems are 3 to 4 inches long.

Harvest parsley using the cut-and-come-again method. Use scissors to snip the outer stems close to the ground. Harvest only as much as you need for a meal.

Growing tip: Parsley is a biennial herb, meaning that it will flower and die in its second year. In cool-summer climates, it is possible to extend the harvest into the second year. To do this, pinch off the flower stalk before it can grow and keep harvesting leaves.

How to use and store: Parsley adds flavor and depth to a meal without being overpowering. Curly parsley is mild. Use it as a garnish for salads, soups, and meat dishes. Italian parsley is more flavorful. Use it cooked or raw in herbed roasts, stews, soups, and salsas. It is also wonderful in vegetable, bean, pasta, and Middle Eastern dishes.

Parsley will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 months.

Nutrition facts: 1 tablespoon raw parsley contains 1.4 calories, 0.1 grams of fiber, and small amounts of vitamins C and A.

Parsnips

When to harvest: October–April



When mature onions are ready for harvest, their tops fall over.



Courtesy of VickySandoval22 via Flickr



Chimichurri

Energize your meat by making this Argentinean sauce made of parsley, cilantro, garlic, and oregano. Add some steamed green beans to the mix!



Curly Parsley

Curly parsley is mild, and Italian parsley is more flavorful.



Italian

How to harvest: Parsnips look like long, fat, white carrots. They are sweetest when temperatures drop below 40°F, so begin harvesting in late fall after the tops freeze back. You can leave parsnips in the ground and harvest them during winter. Protect them by covering the ground with mulch (straw is a good choice). Parsnips get woody when the roots are large and when the plant begins to flower. Try to harvest when the roots are still small to medium-sized and tender.

Harvest parsnips the same way you harvest carrots. Use one hand to hold the leaves close to the base and to wiggle and pull the parsnip. Use your other hand to loosen the soil with a hand trowel or other digging tool.

How to use and store: Parsnips have a sweet, nutty flavor. Use them in much the same way as you use carrots. Roast them with other vegetables. Add them to soups and stews. Grate them raw into salads. Bake them into cakes and muffins.

To store parsnips, first cut off the tops and dust off any soil. They will keep in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for 2 to 6 months.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked parsnips contains 63 calories and 3 grams of fiber. Parsnips are a good source of vitamin C and folate. They contain small amounts of calcium and iron.

Peas, snap or snow

When to harvest: June—early July

How to harvest: Snap peas and snow peas have edible pods that are crisp and sweet. Snap peas are sweeter after the pods begin to fill out. Harvest snap pea pods when they are about as thick as your little finger. The pod should snap when you break it in half. Snow peas have flat pods. Harvest snow pea pods when the peas are barely visible through the skin. Pick both kinds of peas by holding the plant with one hand and the pea pod with the other, close to where it attaches to the plant. Gently pull the pod free of the plant. Take care to avoid ripping either the pod or the plant.

How to use and store: Peas are one of the first sweet crops you can pick in late spring and early summer. Enjoy snap pea pods raw as a snack, or mix them into salads, salad rolls, or pasta dishes. Add snow pea pods to stir-fries, soups, noodle dishes, and Asian-inspired meals.

Wash and dry snap and snow peas before storing them. They will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 1 to 3 weeks. They can be blanched and frozen in their pods.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked peas contains 67 calories and 4.4 grams of fiber. Peas are a good source of vitamins C and A, thiamin, and folate. They contain small amounts of niacin, riboflavin, iron, and calcium.

Peppers

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Peppers are a diverse and colorful crop. The many types range from tiny to large, from pointy to round, and from sweet to spicy. Colors include red, orange, yellow, green, purple, brown, and black.



Harvest bell peppers as soon as they reach about 3 to 4 inches long. You can pick them while they are still green and immature, or you can wait until they reach their mature color if there is enough warm season left. In general, hot peppers are ready for harvest when they turn red. Jalapeños will turn red if left on the plant long enough, but they are usually harvested green.

To harvest a pepper, hold it in your hand and pop it off the plant. It should come off easily. To avoid damage to the plant, you can also harvest peppers with clippers or scissors.

Some gardeners are sensitive to handling hot peppers. Avoid rubbing your eyes after harvesting or wear gloves.

How to use and store

Peppers can be eaten raw or cooked. They add loads of flavor to sauces, salsas, soups, stews, stir-fries, and pasta dishes.

Fresh peppers will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 8 to 10 days. Dried peppers stored in a sealed container will last for 6 months to 1 year. Dry the peppers in a food dehydrator or at 180°F in the oven.

Small hot peppers, like Thai or cayenne, can also be air dried. Traditionally hot peppers are strung together to make colorful chile ristras to dry and hang the hot peppers. To make a ristra, use a large sewing needle and fishing line and pierce the stems to attach the chilis together in a long string, then hang in a warm, well-ventilated location to finish drying the peppers. The hot peppers can be cut off the ristra to use as needed for cooking. Peppers can also be pickled to give another kind of flavor and increase shelf life. *See page 68 for a great spicy pickled pepper recipe*

Nutrition facts: One large uncooked green bell pepper contains 20 calories and no fiber. Peppers are an excellent source of vitamins C and A. Hot peppers are usually not eaten in great enough quantity to contribute to nutrition, but they are also high in vitamins C and A.



Courtesy of BlueMoonbean Studio via Flickr

Chile Ristras

In many cultures, hot peppers are traditionally dried by piercing the stems with a sewing needle and pulling a string through them to hang and dry.



Hot peppers can irritate the skin and eyes. Do not rub your eyes after handling. Wear gloves!



Courtesy of Melissa B. via Flickr

A Mother's Recipe for Spicy Pickled Peppers

5-10 Chiles of your choice (serrano, jalapeño, habanero, etc.)

1-2 ounces of Fennel, Fenugreek, and Mustard seeds

1-2 ounces Turmeric powder

1 cup of mustard oil

1 cup of vinegar

Salt as per taste

Make a paste: Roast seeds first, add oil and turmeric, salt and 1/8 cup of vinegar. Cut the peppers length wise and use a spoon to fill them with the paste. Add contents into a glass jar and pour the remaining vinegar and seal for 24 hours and store in a cool place. Shelf life is 1-2 years

Potatoes

When to harvest: June–October

How to harvest: Potatoes grow underground, so you need to look for clues to know when they are ready for harvest. If you are growing potatoes for storage, dig them in September or October, after the aboveground stems and leaves have mostly died back. You can dig “new potatoes,” which are just immature potatoes, at any time and any size. Use them right away because they do not store well.

To harvest potatoes for storage, dig up the whole potato bed all at once. To harvest new potatoes, dig up only small sections and take as many potatoes as you need. Gently sink a digging fork 4 to 6 inches straight down into your potato bed and pull the handle toward you. Set potatoes aside as they begin to pop up. If you accidentally stab a potato with the fork, use it right away because damaged potatoes do not store well. Any potatoes left in the ground will re-sprout the next year, so do your best to clean out the bed at the end of the season.

Growing tip: If your potatoes are green, they were exposed to too much light. This green portion is bitter and can cause digestive problems. Cut out the green skin with a knife. If there is too much green to cut, throw the potato away. The aboveground part of a potato plant is not edible.



For more information
about growing
potatoes vertically:

See “Trellises and vertical gardening” on page 88.

The flowers and berries are pretty, but do not eat them.

How to use and store: Potatoes add texture to dishes, and they absorb flavors from the other ingredients. Mash them, bake them, or roast them with other root vegetables like onions and carrots. Boil potatoes and dice them into a warm salad, stir them into egg dishes, or blend them into a thick, creamy soup. Be sure to remove the eyes and cook the potatoes all the way through, because raw potatoes can cause digestive upset.

Potatoes that you harvest in fall will store well for 6 to 8 months if you cure them first. Place the potatoes in a dark, well-ventilated area at room temperature (60° to 75°F) for 7 to 10 days. Then dust but do not wash dirt from the potatoes. Store the potatoes in a cool (around 45° to 50°F), dark place with good air circulation. Potatoes are about 80% water, so storing them at high humidity will prevent shriveling.

New potatoes should not be stored. You can keep them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Nutrition facts: One medium potato contains 160 calories and 4 grams of fiber. Potatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of iron and niacin.

Pumpkins

See *Squash, winter*

For More information

Cornell Vegetable Growing Guides

<http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/homegardening/>



To harvest potatoes, gently sink a digging fork 4 to 6 inches straight down into your potato bed and pull the handle toward you.



Radishes

When to harvest: April–June and September–November

How to harvest: Radishes are one of the fastest-growing crops. Some varieties are ready for harvest just 1 month after planting. Radishes come in a variety of colors including white, pink, and purple. They can be either round or long, like a small carrot. Begin harvesting as soon as the radishes are about ½ to 1 inch wide. They will pop up aboveground, so you can see how wide they are. Radishes left in the ground too long become woody and spicy.

Harvest radishes by holding the leaves at the base and gently wiggling until the root comes loose from the soil. A hand trowel can make the job easier.

How to use and store: Radishes are crispy and mild. Slice, shred, or chop them and add them raw to sandwiches, salads, tacos, and pasta dishes. Try radishes salted and roasted, pickled, or dipped in your favorite dressing.

To store radishes, remove the tops about ½ inch from the radish. Wash radishes and store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. They will keep for 5 or 6 days.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup sliced radishes contains 20



Radishes are one of the fastest-growing crops in the garden

calories and no fiber. Radishes are an excellent source of vitamin C.

Spinach

When to harvest: April–June and September–November

How to harvest: Spinach leaves can be eaten when they are very small or when they are bigger. They will grow to the size of a hand or even larger. Spinach leaves should be deep green or silvery green. They may be smooth or bumpy, depending on the variety.

Harvest spinach using the cut-and-come-again method. Snip a few larger leaves from the outside of a plants, close to the ground. The center leaves will continue to produce for a month or more. Spinach will “bolt” (send up a flower stalk) as the weather warms. This makes the leaves taste bitter. If you did not harvest the whole plant before it bolted, then pull it up now and snip off any dark green leaves to use in meals.

How to use and store: Enjoy spinach raw or cooked. Steam it, drizzle on olive oil, and season with salt. Bake it into egg dishes and casseroles, blend it into dips and smoothies, stir it into pastas and bean dishes, and build green salads around it.

To store spinach, wash it and keep it in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition facts: 1 cup raw spinach contains 40 calories

Rosemary Roasted Spinach and Garlic Potatoes

Dice up potatoes of your choice and roast them in the oven for 15 minutes at 350 degrees, sauté some spinach with minced garlic, add the roasted potatoes and sprinkle on some fresh or dried rosemary leaves.



Courtesy of Laurel F via Flickr



Let's Roast Some Seeds!

Save winter squash and pumpkin seeds for roasting! After cleaning them, toss the seeds around in a bowl with melted butter or vegetable oil and salt. Once they are well coated, place the seeds in a single layer on a baking sheet and bake at 300°F for 40-45 minutes until brown. Stir in your favorite spice to add flavor.

and 5 grams of fiber. Spinach is an excellent source of vitamins C and A, and iron.

Squash, summer (including zucchini)

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Summer squash is the name for all tender-skinned squash, including zucchini, crookneck, and pattypan. Their shapes and colors vary, but all are best when harvested small, before they become seedy and fibrous. Harvest zucchini when it no more than 6 to 8 inches long. Harvest round types when they are no more than 3 to 4 inches wide. They will still be edible when they get bigger, but they will not taste as good.

Hold the squash while you snip the stem with scissors, clippers, or a knife. Cut about 1 inch from the squash. Cutting instead of twisting will keep you from accidentally breaking the squash.

How to use and store: Like potatoes, summer squash has a mild flavor and picks up the flavors of the other ingredients in a dish. Slice it and barbecue it. Bake it into savory meals like egg dishes and lasagna. Or bake it into sweet treats like muffins and brownies. Mix it into stir-fries and pasta dishes. Steam it, stuff it, or use it raw in salads and tacos.

Small summer squash taste best! Harvest when they are no longer than 6 to 8 inches.

Store summer squash in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 5 to 14 days.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked summer squash contains 18 calories and 1.3 grams of fiber. Summer squash contains small amounts of vitamins C and A, calcium, and iron.

Squash, winter (including pumpkins)

When to harvest: September–November

How to harvest: Winter squash is the name for all hard-skinned squash and pumpkins. This type of squash grows during summer and stores well into the winter. A ripe winter squash can weigh from a few pounds to a few hundred pounds, and it can be green, red, yellow, blue, white, or multi-colored. Winter squash and pumpkins need to ripen completely on the vine if they are to store well. When winter squash is ready, the skin is tough and hard to pierce with a thumbnail. Also, the stem will begin to turn from green and soft to tan and woody. Use clippers to cut the stem 2 inches from the squash. The attached stem helps the squash keep longer in storage.

How to use and store: For varieties with very thick skins, use a large knife to split the squash into halves or quarters and remove the seeds with a spoon. Place the squash pieces in a shallow pan of water and cover with tinfoil. Bake at 450°F for



about 45 minutes. Once the flesh is soft, scoop it out and use it in pies, soups, and sweet breads and other baked goods. Some varieties, like butternut squash, have thinner skin. You can peel them and then slice, cube, or shred the flesh. Bake, roast, or fry the pieces and use them in sweet or savory dishes.

Winter squash stores well in a cool, dark place for 2 to 6 months, depending on the variety. Cure it first by leaving it in a warm location for 10 days. When you store several squashes, be sure to scatter them and not pile them in one spot.

Tip: Do not cure acorn squash, because curing can make the skin tough. Eat acorn squash soon after harvest because it will store for only up to 2 months.

Nutrition facts: ½ cup cooked winter squash contains 40 calories and 2.9 grams of fiber. Winter squash is an excellent source of vitamin C and contains a small amount of folate.

Tomatoes

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: There are more than 4,000 tomato varieties in the world. Common garden varieties come in almost every color: white, pink, red, orange, yellow, green, purple, black, and even striped! Tomatoes may be large and round, tiny and pear-shaped, or long and pepper-like. The plant tags that come with your tomato transplants will tell you what your ripe tomato should look like when they are ready to harvest. For all varieties, pick the fruit when it is just slightly under-ripe. The fruit should feel firm with just a little give. The color should be at or close to mature color, and the tomato should be easy to pull off the vine. Full-sized, under-ripe tomatoes will continue to ripen after harvest. If you expect a frost, pick all full-sized green tomatoes before they are damaged. To harvest large tomato varieties, hold the fruit and twist it off the vine with your hand. To harvest smaller grape or cherry tomato varieties, hand pick each one or snip entire bunches off the plant with scissors or clippers.

How to use and store: Garden-fresh tomatoes are delicious summer treats. Use them as a base for sauces and salsas. Slice or chop them for pizzas, sandwiches, pasta dishes, and green salads. Blend them with other vegetables into a cold

summer soup.

Stuff them with your favorite cheese and bake them. Skewer and grill them. Enjoy them fresh, sprinkled with a little salt and some herbs from your garden.

Store ripe tomatoes in a plastic bag in your refrigerator for 4 to 10 days. Green tomatoes will store

for 1 to 6 weeks in the refrigerator. Move them out of the refrigerator to ripen at room temperature when you want to use them. They can also be canned for various uses: paste, salsa, juice, sauce, etc.

Nutrition facts: One medium-sized raw tomato contains about 25 calories and 1.4 grams of fiber. Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of vitamin A.



Courtesy of Media Mike hazard via flickr



Courtesy of www.publicphoto.org

The blossoms of both summer and winter squash are also edible! Use them as pizza or quesadilla toppings, stuff them with cheese to make fritters, and even bake them into muffins.

Watermelon

When to harvest: August–September

How to harvest: Watermelon can be difficult to grow in the Northeast because it needs a long warm season to ripen. A watermelon will not ripen off the vine, so be sure to harvest only when it is fully ripe.

To know when a watermelon is ripe, look for these signs: 1) the green, curly tendrils near where the vine attaches to the fruit will turn brown and dry out; 2) the surface color of the fruit will turn from smooth and shiny to rough and dull; 3) the skin will become tough and will be hard to pierce with a thumbnail; and 4) the underside of the melon (where it lies on the soil) will turn from light green to yellowish.

A ripe watermelon should detach easily from the vine. Simply pick it up off the ground.

How to use and store: Eat watermelon by itself, or blend it into juices, smoothies, and cold summer soups. Pour watermelon juice into popsicle molds and freeze them. Slice watermelon into salads or serve it with fish, cheese, or salted meat.

Store a whole watermelon in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for 2 to 3 weeks.

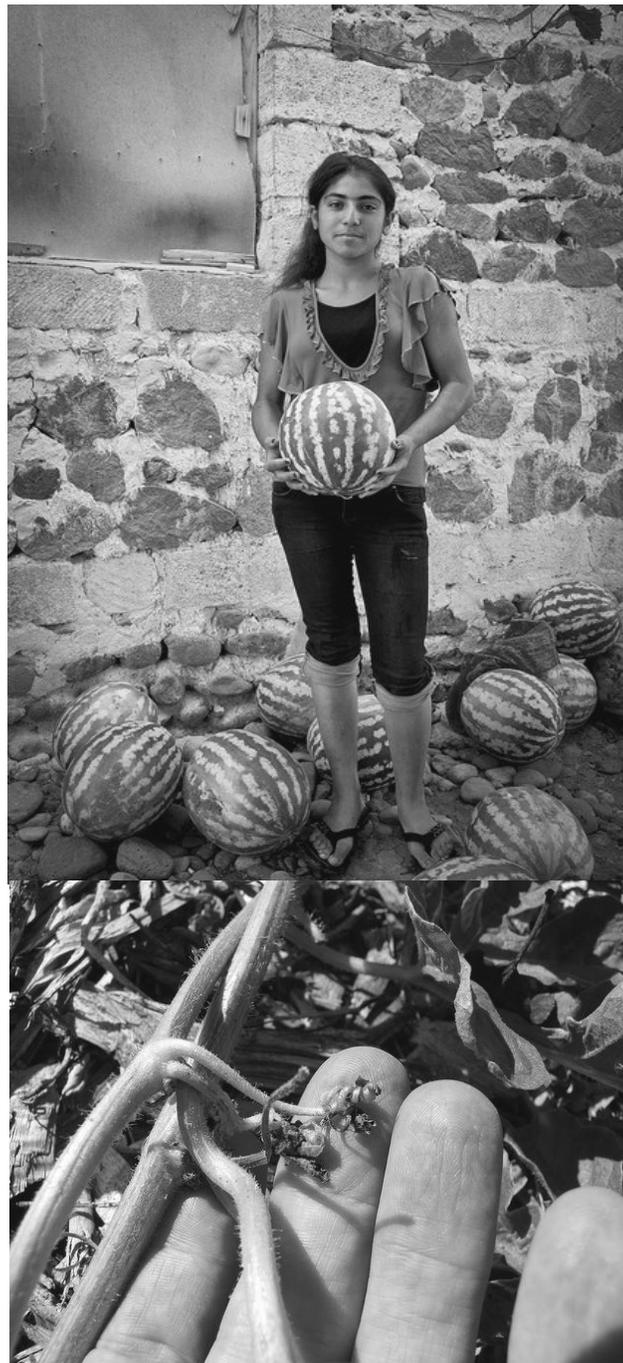
Nutrition facts: 1 cup watermelon contains 50 calories and less than 1 gram of fiber. Watermelon is an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of vitamin A. It contains small amounts of calcium.

Zucchini

See *Squash, summer*

At harvest, the green, curly tendrils near where the vine attach to the fruit will turn brown and dry out.

A ripe watermelon should detach easily from the vine. Simply pick it up off the ground!



Courtesy of Asian Development Bank via Flickr

Courtesy of Forest and Kim Starr via Flickr



Courtesy of Joan Nova via flickr

Easy Peasy Zucchini Fries

Ingredients: zucchini, breadcrumbs, eggs, flour, and spices of your choice

Preheat the oven to 425°F

Slice up zucchinis lengthwise;

In a bowl, combine beaten eggs and spices

Dredge the zucchini pieces in flour; dip into egg and spice bowl

Then dredge the zucchini in a bowl of breadcrumbs, press to coat

Place Zucchini onto a baking sheet and bake for 20-25 min





Courtesy of USAID via Flickr

Lettuce grows best in spring and fall weather. It tends to bolt (send up a flower stalk) in hot summer weather, which makes it bitter and much less tasty. For all lettuce varieties, be sure to harvest before the plant bolts.

Dr. Jane Mt. Pleasant, a professor of Horticulture at Cornell University, leads a planting ceremony at the Native American house (Akwe:kon) located on campus. Over the past thirty years, she has worked on revitalizing interest and practice of Iroquois polyculture, a system that allows interdependent plants to flourish. The Three Sisters is an example of indigenous polyculture.



Courtesy of the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program



Courtesy of USMission via Flickr

Countries like Brazil are gradually moving towards sustainable and local agricultural practices. When communities work together to grow their own food, they are cultivating a space to learn from each other as well as gaining a deeper appreciation for the land.



Sunflowers are a beautiful addition to a vegetable garden, and the seeds can be harvested and toasted for a healthy and tasty snack.

Courtesy of CCE Tompkins

Cooking with vegetables from the garden is a fun activity for children!



Courtesy of CAFOD via Flickr



Culture and livelihood are closely connected with the kinds of food that we grow.



*Community gardening
brings generations of people
together!*



Courtesy of CCE Tompkins County

Courtesy of CAFOD via Flickr



*Participants at a CCE class learn how
to can and freeze garden vegetables.*

Need to preserve a large harvest?

Freezing is one of the easiest, fastest, and lowest-cost way to preserve food. For details on freezing food see:
Freezing Fruits and Vegetables at
<http://cctompkins.org/resources/freezing-fruits-vegetables>

Or

The National Center for Home Food Preservation
Nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze.html



Welcome, gardeners!

We invite you to experience the deep satisfaction that comes from growing a portion of your own food.

This booklet was created for participants of the Seed to Supper course, a shared program of Oregon Food Bank's Learning Gardens and adopted by the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of New York State in January of 2016. Seed to Supper is a comprehensive beginning vegetable gardening curriculum designed for adults gardening on a budget. Taught at community sites throughout New York by trained volunteer Garden Educators, Seed to Supper highlights practical, low-cost techniques for building, planning, planting, maintaining and harvesting a successful vegetable garden.

Seed to Supper in New York State is partnering with New York's Food Banks and Extension offices to build more food secure communities—places where all people at all times have access to enough food for a healthy life. Increasing community food security through programs in gardening, nutrition education, advocacy, and community organizing goes hand-in-hand with our work to help people living with low incomes meet their short-term food needs.

Whether you've taken a Seed to Supper class or come across this booklet in another way, we hope that the information in these pages will help you make budget-friendly decisions in your garden and, ultimately, share in the joy of eating your own home-grown vegetables!

Happy gardening,



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension

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