



June 27, 2018

When to Harvest Garden Vegetables?

Many garden vegetables will be ready to harvest soon. One key step in growing a vegetable garden is being able to harvest the crop when they are at the best stage of quality. Let's look at some common vegetables to see when the correct time is for their harvest.

Snap beans: Pods should break easily with a "snap" when ready for harvest. Seeds should not cause pods to bulge. If you prefer shelly beans, pick when the seeds are the size you prefer.

Lima beans: Harvest when the pods are full, spongy, and seeds are green for canning, freezing or for fresh eating.

Cantaloupes: Harvest when the melon can be lifted and the vine "slips" away without applying any pressure.

Sweet Corn: Harvest when the silk has turned black, the end of the ear is blunt, and the shuck is still dark green. Remove the shuck and silk immediately and place the corn in cold water in order to preserve the flavor. The quicker you can cool the corn, the better the flavor. Quick cooling keeps sugars from converting to starch.

Note: Japanese beetles are now very active. They love sweet corn silks. To ensure pollination of your sweet corn, keep the silks coated with Sevin.

Cucumbers: Harvest before they begin to yellow. For sweet pickles, 2-3" long; for dills, 5-6" long and for slicing, 6-8" long. Yellowing of the cucumber indicates over-maturity and they are usually bitter at that stage. Remove all old cucumbers from vines.

Eggplant: Pick when fruits are shiny. A dull-colored fruit with brown seed are past the edible stage.

Okra: The highest quality occurs when pods are 2.5" to 3.5" long. This may mean that harvesting is required on a daily basis.

Onions: For storage, harvest any time after the tops have fallen over.

Irish Potatoes: Harvest them anytime the tubers are large enough to use. They will keep until fall in the ground if you do not have a cool space to store them.

Black eyed peas or cowpeas: For fresh use, freezing, or canning harvest when the pods begin to lose their brilliant green color and while they shell easily.

Pepper: Harvest when mature green or fully red. Cut instead of pulling to avoid breaking the plant.

Summer Squash: Harvest yellow crookneck squash when they are about 1.5" to 2.5" in diameter; yellow straightneck when they are 5-7" long; zucchini when they are 7-9" long; scallop squash or patty pan squash while they are grayish white.

Winter Squash: Harvest when the rinds are hard enough that they cannot be dug into with a fingernail. Cut the stems 2-3" from the fruit to improve the keeping quality of the squash.

Sweet Potatoes: For immediate use, any time after the roots reach the size you desire. For storage, harvest before frost damages the vines.

Tomatoes: Harvest when they are firm and fully covered for home use.

Note: Tomatoes normally experiencing severe disease pressure each year due to a combination of rain, high humidity and high temperatures. Early blight disease and late blight will probably show up as usual this year. Protect your tomatoes with Mancozeb 75DF, Maneb 80WP, or Chlorothaliniil 54F. These products will NOT control blossom-end rot. Blossom-end rot is caused by a calcium shortage in the soil and is usually a good indicator that the garden needs lime.

Don't spray tomatoes with Sevin when the temperatures are above 90 degrees because Sevin will cause the tomato plants to drop blossoms. Tomatoes normally drop their blossoms in extreme heat anyway, so don't help your tomatoes lose blossoms by the addition of Sevin during high heat periods.

Watermelons: When thumped, the sound is deadened, the tendrils will die back, the rind in contact with the ground will have a yellowish color with black pin-head size spots, and the darker netting of the rind will begin to turn dull in appearance.

Garden Tips: When watering a garden during dry weather, avoid applications of a little water on a daily basis. When you water, apply enough water to soak the soil to a depth of 8 to 10 inches. This encourages deep root system development and improves the plants tolerance to dry weather.

When cultivation is done, keep it shallow to avoid breaking of the plant's roots. A mulch of pine needles, straw, compost or other available materials will reduce the need for root damaging cultivation.

Remove any plants from the garden that have finished production. Remove all old bush or pole bean plants, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, squash, and other plants as soon as they are no longer being harvested. This will enable you to care for the garden and lessen the harboring of diseases for next year.

Inspect the garden daily for insects and disease problems. Before applying insecticides or fungicides, be sure that the problem has been properly identified.

Harvest vegetables frequently to maximize yields of tender, high quality vegetables. Be sure to remove old vegetables you may have missed at earlier harvest.