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Green

# Vegetable Harvest Tip Sheet

**Asparagus:** Cut for only 3-4 weeks the second year of growth; harvest for 5-7 weeks all years afterwards. Cut when the spears first appear in the spring before the tips lose their tight appearance.

**Lima Beans & Snap Beans:** Pick before seeds reach their full maturity, when they are still tender. Never allow any old pods to stay on the bush or vine since this will slow down new pod set.

**Beets:** Beets are ready for harvest when the tops are large enough to be used for greens or the root is large enough for cooking (1--1-1/2 inches in diameter).

**Broccoli:** Cut when center shoot or head is about 5-8 inches across but while the little individual buds are still tight. Side shoots will develop that can be harvested for about a month.

**Cabbage:** Harvest when the heads are solid and before they split.

**Carrots:** Harvest when big enough to eat. Early pencil-sized thinnings are delicious.

**Cauliflower:** Tie leaves together when young heads are 2-3 inches in diameter. Cut white heads when big enough but before they get "ricey".

**Swiss Chard:** Keep outer leaves cut, and the plant will continue to produce greens until frost.

**Collards:** Harvest the leaves as needed. The flavor is improved by a touch of frost.

**Sweet Corn:** The best time for canning and eating fresh corn is when it is in the milk stage. The kernels are full grown but the milk is still watery and will squirt out freely when pressed.

**Cucumbers:** Harvest when fruits are slender and dark green, before color starts to get light. Keep the vines picked clean; just one old cucumber left on the vine will cause it to stop setting fruit.

**Egg Plant:** Fruits must be used while still highly glossy on the outside. As soon as the fruit begins to dull, the flavor becomes bitter. Harvest promptly when mature.

**Kale:** Cut outer leaves or the entire plant. Frost may improve the flavor.

**Kohlrabi:** Harvest as soon as the stem enlargement attains a diameter of 2-3 inches, since it becomes tough when larger.

**Leeks:** Toward the end of the summer the leeks should be blanched by hilling the soil around the lower stems. Harvest in fall, winter, or the following spring after a spring planting.

**Lettuce:** Pick outer leaves of leaf lettuce as they grow. Harvest heading types when the head is full. Harvest before heat causes bitterness if they variety is not heat tolerant.

**Muskmelon (Cantaloupe):** This is fully ripe when the stem will slip or break away by just lifting the melon.

**Okra:** Harvest every day or so to get the young (up to 3-1/2") pods that are still very tender. The pods must be kept picked for continuous pod production.

**Onions:** For scallions or spring onions, harvest when ½" in diameter. For storing, harvest when the stalks turn brown and fall over. More uniform ripening can be obtained by bending the tops over by hand.

**Parsnip:** Leave in the ground and use as needed. Can be harvested from first frost to late February, prior to spring growth.

**Peas:** Snow peas are harvested when the pods develop, but before the peas get large. Standard peas should be picked slightly before the seeds reach their full size.

**Pepper:** Harvest when the fruit is mature. Sweet peppers are of better quality when allowed to turn red on the plant.

**Potato:** Harvest when the vine dies (or before, if new potatoes are desired). Potatoes for storing will keep better if allowed to remain in the ground a while after the vines die. Prevent exposure of tubers to light as long as they are in the ground.

**Pumpkin:** Harvest when fully mature but before frost. The color will be dark and the rind will be hard.

**Radish:** Pull when the roots are big enough to eat. Early thinnings can be pulled small to make room for others to grow.

**Spinach:** May be harvested from the time the plants have 5-6 leaves until just before the seedstalks develop.

**Squash:** Summer Squash is picked when small and still very tender. Like cucumbers, they should never be left on the vine past maturity. Winter Squash can be picked young and eaten like summer squash; but should be left on the vine until they reach full maturity for the characteristic winter squash.

The rind will be hard and the color will have deepened in most cases.

**Sweet Potato:** May be dug as soon as the roots are edible size. For storing, they should be well matured before digging. That is, a cut surface dries on exposure to air, as opposed to turning dark as immature ones do.

**Tomato:** Pick when they become red ripe but before they get soft. If picked green, they will ripen in the dark.

**Turnip:** Harvest when tops are large enough to cut or when the roots reach the desired size.

**Watermelon:** The bottom color changes from a light to a richer yellow. The top surface takes on a dull appearance.

## Notes: