

Harvesting vegetables at their peak

The following list is helpful in harvesting vegetables at their peak of freshness.

Asparagus: Harvest when spears are 6 to 9 inches tall.

Snap beans: Harvest while pods are still smooth.

Lima beans: Harvest when pods are full but seeds are green.

Beets: Harvest when 1½ to 2½ inches in diameter.

Broccoli: Harvest before flowers show yellow color. Remove the center head and allow side shoots to form and harvest them.

Cantaloupe: Harvest when melons can be removed from the vine without pressure.

Cabbage: Harvest when head is firm and heavy.

Cauliflower: Harvest before curd loosens and discolors. After head is removed, discard the plant.

Carrots: Harvest anytime roots are firm and brittle.

Corn: Harvest when kernel juice is milk-like in color, silk begins to dry, and ears are full to end.

Cucumbers: Harvest while seeds are small, flesh is firm and color is green.

Eggplant: Harvest before color begins to dull: firm to touch.

Lettuce: Harvest while tender and milk-flavored before seed stalk begins to form.

Okra: Harvest when pods are 2½ to 3½ inches long.

Onions: For green bunching, harvest when bulbs are 3/8 to 1 inch in diameter. For storing, harvest after tops have died down.

English peas: Harvest after the pods have filled out before they turn yellow.

Sugar snap peas: Harvest after pods form but before yellowing.

Southern peas: For fresh or frozen use, harvest when pods shell easily. For drying, harvest after pods are dry and brittle.

Pumpkins: Harvest after they are full size.

Bell pepper: Harvest when pods are full size and firm.

Hot peppers: Harvest after pods reach full size.

Irish potatoes: For fresh use, harvest after tubers are one inch in diameter. For storage, harvest after vines have died down.

Sweet potatoes: Harvest after reaching desired size but before frost or cold weather, approximately 120 days from planting to harvest.

Radish: Harvest while firm and brilliantly colored.

Summer squash: Harvest when large end is 1 to 2¼ inches in diameter.

Winter squash: Harvest when rind is not easily dented by fingernail.

Swiss chard: Harvest while leaves are crisp and dark green.

Spinach: Harvest while leaves are crisp and dark green.

Tomatoes: Harvest when full colored but still firm.

Turnip greens: Harvest while leaves are crisp and green.

Turnip roots: Harvest when 2½ to 3½ inches in diameter.

Watermelon: Harvest when tendrils die, rind on ground becomes yellow and netting thickens.

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