



When to Harvest Vegetables in the

EDIBLE GARDEN



When to Harvest Warm-Season Vegetables in the Edible Garden

Warm-season vegetables need warm soils and temperatures to grow. These plants include beans, corn, peppers, tomatoes, winter and summer squash, as well as pumpkins. Here are a few tips to determine when it is harvest time for a few common warm-season vegetables.



TOMATOES



Tomato plants are usually harvested mid- to late summer. Tomatoes can be red, pink, yellow, orange, purple, and even black. You can pick a tomato when it is green with a hint of colour, and then ripen it in your kitchen. This means you don't have to panic if you have a lot of green tomatoes on your plants and a heavy frost is in the forecast.

When picking tomatoes, be careful not to break the stems of the plant. Hold the fruit with one hand and the stem with the other hand, while gently pulling the fruit away from the stem.

There are many different things you can do with tomatoes. You can preserve them by canning, freezing, or dehydration. If your tomatoes are picked too early and they stay green, you can use them in recipes that call for green tomatoes.



PEPPERS



Peppers are usually harvested when they reach their mature colour – that may be red, orange, green, or yellow. This will give them their proper flavour. Sweet peppers will have a sweeter taste while the flavour of hot peppers will increase in heat even more. Be sure to harvest all of the fruit before it becomes too soft.

To harvest peppers, use a sharp pair of long-bladed scissors. Yanking them off the plants with your hands may break the stems and damage the plant.



Peppers can be stored for up to two weeks in a plastic bag with small holes in the refrigerator. They can also be preserved by pickling and adding them to salsas.

SWEET CORN



Sweet corn is usually ready to be picked three weeks after the first bit of silk appears on the ear. When you pick the ears, the husks should still be green and the silk should be a golden-brown. To harvest ears of corn, pull down on the ear and twist it a bit until it snaps off of the stalk.

Fresh corn lasts for about one week in the refrigerator before it starts to lose its flavour. Corn can be canned using a pressure canner. It can also be blanched and frozen. Blanching means you put it in boiling water and then into ice water. This is done to reduce quality loss.



BEANS



If you are growing wax, bush, or pole beans (all known as snap beans), you harvest them when the pods are young and starting to plump up with the bean seeds inside. If you wait too long, the beans will become woody. Snap beans do not all mature at the same time, so be prepared to pick beans daily for several weeks.

Snap beans can be yellow, green, or purple. When they have reached full colour they may be harvested. Snap beans will keep for up to two weeks in the refrigerator. They may be pickled, or blanched and frozen for later use.



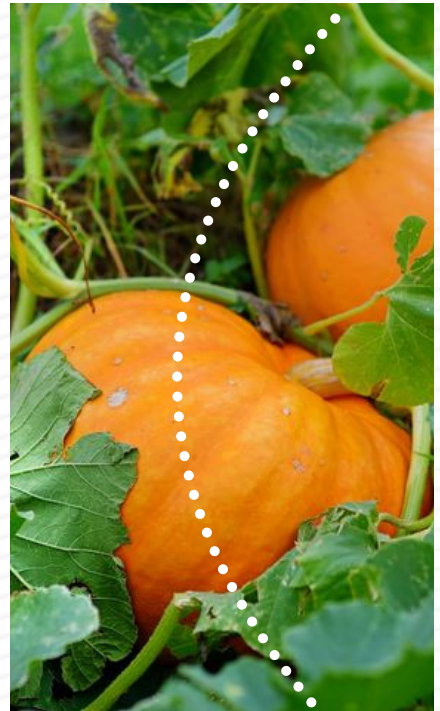
Shell beans such as kidney and fava beans may be harvested while they are still tender (green), before the pod has dried, but most gardeners wait until the pods have completely dried on the plant. When fully dried, they can be stored in airtight containers in a cool, dry cupboard for up to one year.

To harvest beans, use one hand to support the stem of the bean plant. With the other hand, hold the pod near the stem. Pinch the stem where it meets the pod with your thumb and forefinger.

PUMPKINS & WINTER SQUASH



The colour of the fruit of pumpkins and winter squash such as acorn, spaghetti, and butternut can vary. When they have reached full colour, press your finger against the outside. You can pick them if it is hard. The fruit may sound a bit hollow inside when you gently tap the side of the fruit. The stem of the fruit should be dry and hard. Check your seed packages to see if the fruit has reached its full size and look at the days to maturity. Be sure to get your pumpkins and winter squash out of the garden before the first frost, as the cold will turn them into mush.



To harvest pumpkins and winter squash, carefully cut them off using a sharp knife. Leave a long stem as this may stop it from rotting.

Pumpkins and all winter squash must be cured for long-term storage. This can be done by setting them in a warm room for 7-10 days. This will harden the skin and improve the flavour.

SUMMER SQUASH

Summer squash such as zucchini and pattypan grow fast and are usually harvested in mid-summer. When zucchini get too big, they tend to get pulpy and start producing a lot of seeds if they are left to grow huge. Harvest zucchini when it is about 20 centimetres long. Pattypanns are best when small, about 7.6 centimetres in diameter.

Summer squash can store for approximately one week in the fridge. Wrap individual fruit in a piece of paper towel to capture moisture, then place them in a plastic bag.

Summer and winter squash may be roasted, baked, or cooked into various dishes and frozen.

Remember to harvest all warm-season vegetables in the cool of the morning, instead of when the sun is beating down on the garden at midday. Process or consume your harvest as soon as possible after picking to retain its quality and freshness.





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