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Harvesting Vegetables

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College of Agricultural, Human & Natural Sciences

Cooperative Extension Program



Agriculture and Natural Resources
FACT SHEET
ANR-4

An Outreach Education Program Serving Limited Resource Individuals, Families and Communities

A GUIDE TO HARVESTING GARDEN VEGETABLES

by

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Richard Winston, Extension Associate Professor, Plant Science

Finis Stribling, Interim Farm Superintendent

Vegetable	Vegetable appearance
Asparagus	When spears are 6 to 9 inches tall
Beans, Lima	When pods are full but seeds are green
Beans, Snap	While pods snap easily and are still smooth
Beets	1 ½ to 2 ½ inch beets have highest quality
Broccoli	Before flowers show yellow color
Cabbage	When heads become firm and heavy
Cantaloupe	When melons can be lifted and the vines snap without pressure
Carrot	Any time roots are firm and brittle
Cauliflower	Before curd loosens and discolors
Collard	When leaves are large but still green and firm
Corn	When kernel juice is milky, silk begins to dry and ears are full to end
Cucumber	When seeds are small, flesh is firm and color is green
Eggplant	Before color begins to dull
Kale	When leaves are large but before they yellow
Kohlrabi	When 2 inches or more in diameter but still tender
Lettuce	When tender and mild flavored; before bolting
Mustard	When leaves are crisp and tender
Okra	When pods are 2 ½ to 3 ½ inches long and seeds are not developed
Onion	For green onions: when bulb is 3/8 to 1 inch in diameter For storing: after the tops have died down

Vegetable	Vegetable appearance
Parsnip	After cool weather has improved quality
Peas, English	After pods have filled but before they turn yellow
Peas, Southern	For fresh use or freezing: when pods shell easily For drying: after pods are dry and brittle
Pepper, Hot	After pods reach full size
Pepper, Sweet	When pods are full size and still firm
Potato, Irish	For immediate use: after tubers are 1 inch in diameter For storage: after vines have died and skin has set
Potato, Sweet	After reaching desired size but before cool fall rains
Pumpkin	After they are full grown and mature in color; before frost
Radish	When firm and brilliantly colored
Rutabaga	Before becoming tough
Spinach	When leaves are crisp and dark green
Squash, Summer	When large end is 1-2 ½ inches in diameter and skin is still tender
Squash, Winter	When rind/skin is not easily scratched by fingernail
Swiss, Chard	When leaves are crisp, tender and still green
Tomato	When fully colored but still firm
Turnip Greens	While leaves are green and crisp
Turnip Roots	After 2 inches in diameter but while still tender
Watermelon	When tendrils adjacent to fruit die and rind/skin on ground becomes yellow

This *Agriculture & Natural Resources* Fact Sheet is part of a series prepared by the Small Farms Program of the Cooperative Extension Program at Tennessee State University.

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