

## WHEN ARE VEGETABLES RIPE?

Below are tips for telling when vegetables are ready to harvest.

**BEANS** (shell) - Wait until pods are well filled or production stops.

**BEANS** (snap) - When pods snap readily but tips are still pliable.

**BEETS** - When medium-sized (1½ to 2 inches in diameter). Those with rough ridges or growth cracks are likely to be tough, but higher in sugar content.

**BROCCOLI** - Stalks firm but tender, buds compact and now showing color of flowers.

**BRUSSELS SPROUTS** - Heads firm, compact and bright green.

**CABBAGE** - Heads are firm when squeezed and heavy for their size. Harvest before splitting. Early varieties, pointed or conical, may be three-fourths mature; late varieties fully mature and firm.

**CANTALOUPE** - Ready when eye or button at blossom end gives in to pressure from finger and fruit separates easily from stem. Netting should be coarse, cordy, prominent and grayish, with no green lines showing.

**CARROTS** - Sugar content is higher in mature roots, but younger ones are more tender. For eating at once or preserving, pick when small, firm and well colored.

**CAULIFLOWER** - Pick before rice-textured, discolored or blemished. Heads should be firm and clean white (or purple-color disappears in cooking). Softness or yellowing florets or leaves indicates over ripening or insufficient water. To blanch, tie outer leaves when kurds are 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Ready 4 to 12 days after tying.

**CORN** - Pick when silks turn dark and begin to shrivel. Kernels should be bright, plump and milky. If small and soft, they are tasteless; if large and hard, they will be starchy and flavorless. Keep cool and cook within one hour of picking.

**CUCUMBERS** - Best when they are of moderate size, a good green color, firm, and spines are just beginning to soften. They are past prime if large, puffy and beginning to yellow.

**EGGPLANT** - Ready when fruits are half-grown - just before color dulls.

**JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE**s - Dig any time at end of the season before ground freezes, or in early spring before growth starts.

**KOHL-RABI** - Pick when swollen stem is 1½ to 2 inches in diameter - they become woody and tasteless if allowed to get bigger.

**NEW ZEALAND SPINACH** - Pick only the young leaves or just the tips of the older leaves.

**OKRA** - Pick pods when they are 2 to 4 inches long, snap easily and are easily punctured.

**ONIONS** - Pick when ¼ to ½ inch in diameter for fresh table use; when 1 to 1½ inches for boiling and pickling, and when tops have died down for storage. Mature bulbs should not be readily dented by fingers.

**PARSNIPS** - They are not fully flavored until after early frosts. Moderate size is best, if too large they may be woody. Soft and flabby ones may be pithy.

**PEAS** - Best when still bright green and pods fairly well filled. Flat, dark green pods are immature, yellowish and hard pods are too old. Peas should be very sweet when eaten raw.

**PEPPERS** - Firm and good shiny green when in their prime. Allow the red varieties to reach a uniform coloring.

**POTATOES** - Harvest as soon as large enough for early potatoes, but dig the main or storage crop after tops have died down. Greenish or "sunburned" tubers are usually bitter. They should be discarded or peeled deeply.

**PUMPKINS** - Harvest when color is good all over and fruits give off a sharp thud when hit with your knuckles. Harvest **before** frost.

**RADISHES** - Pull as soon as large enough. Split, pithy or spongy radishes are not crisp.

**RHUBARB** - Pull stems anytime they are large enough. Throw away the leaves, which are poisonous.

**RUTABAGA** - Dig anytime they are large enough up until the ground freezes. They become dry and woody if soil moisture is inadequate.

**SALSIFY** - Moderate-sized roots are best. Flavor is improved after early frosts. Large roots usually woody. Flabby ones are fibrous.

**SPINACH** - Use before leaves get old, tired, and tough.

**SQUASH** (summer) - Pick when moderate sized, color is good, and rind is easily dented with your thumbnail.

**SQUASH** (winter) - Color should be typical for the variety and rind is firm enough so it is not readily punctured by thumbnail.

**SWISS CHARD** - As soon as leaves are large enough to pick; leaves from about 12 inches up.

**TOMATOES** - Pick when color (red or yellow) is uniform all over. Size is no indication of maturity. Fruits will ripen off the vine, but flavor is much better when ripened on the vine.

**TURNIPS** - Best when they are of moderate size, firm and fairly heavy. Do not leave them in the ground too long - overgrown ones are tough, woody, and too strongly flavored.

**WATERMELONS** - Ripe when a rap on the side gives a dull thud - a sharp or solid sound indicates immaturity. This works better on the large varieties, not as well on the midget types. Avoid those with white undersides.

As a general rule, after harvesting vegetables that will wilt, remove bruised leaves, wash, drain well, and store them in moisture-proof containers in the refrigerator if they cannot all be used at once.

Root vegetables that cannot be utilized at one time should have their tops cut off, leaving about an inch. Wash and immediately place them in the closed storage compartment of the refrigerator.