

Vegetable Harvest and Storage Cheat Sheet

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General Concepts

- choose the right varieties
- good field management – fertility, water, esp. insect and disease management
- harvest at optimal maturity – cure if needed
- produce should be seen not heard – handle carefully in the field
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Cabbage

- Insect management – frass early
- heads should not be picked by snapping or twisting – broken stems are more susceptible to decay
- remove yellow, damaged, and disease wrapper leaves
- store at 32 F, 95% RH
- ethylene sensitive – can make leaves yellow

Carrots

- Harvest at maturity – 100-110 DAP
- Rinse in 100 ppm chlorine
- Ethylene sensitive – can make carrots bitter
- Drip dry on screen
- Store in plastic lined boxes
- 32-36 F, 98% RH
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Parsnips

- similar in many respects to carrot
- surface browning can be a significant problem largely associated with bruising and abrasion injury during harvest
- some cultivars are browning resistant
- later harvest have a sweeter taste – wait until after first frost
- can simulate effect by storing at cold temperatures
- freezing can cause browning of the core
- can store for 4-6 months at 32-34 F, 98% RH

Rutabagas

- also after first frost
- trim tops to 1"
- can also become sweeter in storage
- 32-34F, 95% RH

Potatoes

- Immature potatoes - Periderm thin, poorly developed – easily bruised, decayed
- Irrigation and vine kill treatments
- When potato vines begin to die, bulking declines and tubers begin to mature
- Mechanical methods of vine killing should be done 14-21 days before harvest so that tubers mature and skin set
- The ‘curing’, ‘suberization’ or ‘wound healing’ period immediately after harvest is critical to successful storage.
- ☑ Store tubers at about 50-60°F at high relative humidity (95%) for 10-14 days to allow wounds to heal before placing potatoes into colder storage. Lower RH results in poor suberization.
- then – 40-42F with 95% RH
- Unlike other root crops – want low sugars, high starch

Squash

- In general, look for a color change on the rind – dull appearance, color change
 - butternut squash changes from light beige to deep tan when ripe.
 - Many winter squash will develop an orange blush in spots, such as the Acorn squash, which is deep glossy green with a yellow spot facing the ground. When the yellow spot changes to orange, the fruit is ready to pick
 - Spaghetti squash changes from creamy white to bright yellow at maturity.
 - delicata types, which have green streaks across a white background, are ready when the white changes to beige and an orange blush appears.
- Rind becomes hard – cannot easily pierce with fingernail
- Healthy vines begin to die back – however, not indicator if vines dying back from dry conditions, disease, or frost
- Don’t let fruit be exposed to hard frost
- Cut flat stem 1” at harvest – be sure not to puncture or bruise other fruit
- Allow fruits to cure for two weeks at 70-80 F, humidity 80%
- Acorn squash – shortest storage, should not be cured
- Ethylene can cause issues with squash color
- Store at 50 F, 50-70%RH

Onions

- tops fall over when mature
- optimal maturity – 80% of tops have fallen over
- bulbs should be cured - allows for development of thick, tight outer scales
- variety selection is important
- curing – 68-86 F, 70%RH for 2-3 days
- cut tops, leave 2”
- store at 32F, dry air – 60% RH
- not ethylene sensitive

Garlic

- As half of the leaves begin to die back in July, harvest the garlic by gently pulling on the stalk while prying beneath the bulb with a trowel. The clove you planted last fall will have magically turned into a multi-cloved bulb. Gently shake off the dirt, but do not wash before storage. Don't wait until all the leaves have died-back or your bulbs will not store well.
- Cure the garlic by hanging in a warm, dry, well ventilated place, such as a barn or attic, or lay them on a sheet of cardboard in the garage. Let them cure for two weeks.
- Give bulbs a shake after two weeks of curing to remove more soil. Cut off the stalks of hardneck varieties and store them in a cool dry place. For softneck you can leave the stalks attached if you wish to braid and hang them for ease of use and aesthetics in the kitchen, or you may also cut off the stalks and store them with the hardneck varieties.
- Store same as onions