



Newsletter for friends having fun in the dirt!

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THE "HARVEST SEASON" EDITION

It's time to check your garden often!

There is probably nothing more exciting to a gardener than seeing their efforts deliver a bountiful harvest of vegetables and fruits. This month's newsletter is dedicated to preparing you to "reap your rewards!"

Kohlrabi

Many of our gardeners began harvesting their kohlrabi a few weeks ago – some were the size of *softballs!*

When to pick

Harvest kohlrabi stems when they are still young and tender, usually about 2 1/2 to 4 inches in diameter. Be careful not to let them get *too big*. Large, older kohlrabi can become woody and it may have an "off" flavor.

Harvest by cutting them from the base of the plant. You can trim the leaves from the stem and save them to cook separately.

Kohlrabi keeps for 2 to 3 weeks in the refrigerator.



Did you know you can also peel and slice kohlrabi tubers to eat them raw with dips or in salads, or you can cook them like turnips? The leaves are cooked until just tender, like cabbage or turnip greens.

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Tomatoes

All sizes and types of tomatoes have begun turning red! Unfortunately, we've already seen some that have fallen off the vine and are beginning to rot.

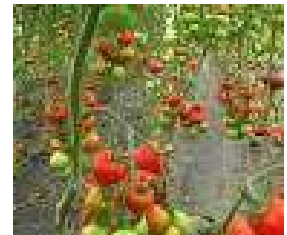
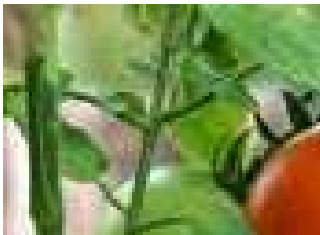
When to pick

CHECK YOUR GARDEN REGULARLY!

More tomatoes are ripening every day.



You can see some of these beauties in our garden.



Cucumbers

It's hard to wait for those first tastes of your summer harvest, and cucumbers are no exception.

Harvesting ripe cucumbers at the right time ensures sweet fruits that have no bitterness. Cucumbers left on the vine too long can have a bitter taste that ruins the fresh flavor. The fruits ripen at different times on the vine, so it is essential to pick them as they are ready. Remove fruits that are stunted and not growing, have rotten ends or are past their prime. This prevents the plant from focusing energy on fruits that are a waste anyway.

When to pick

Cucumbers must be picked before they show the first signs of yellowing, which indicate the fruits are past their prime. Ripe cucumbers have a firm, green flesh.



Use garden shears or pruners when harvesting ripe cucumbers. Removing the fruit with a sharp implement will prevent injury to the vine by twisting or pulling. Cut the stem $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the fruit.

Cucumbers are best fresh but they may be stored in the crisper for up to three days. You can just place the fruits in loose plastic or perforated bags. Avoid stacking them and keep them from smashing against the side of the crisper drawer to prevent moisture loss.



Banana Peppers

Did you know all peppers start out green and eventually ripen to their final colors? Some peppers go through multiple shades before settling into a mature red, brown, or orange.

Banana peppers are no exception. They begin life green before maturing to a light canary yellow color. If left longer on the plant they will eventually turn a light red color.



When to pick

Peppers are edible at any stage. Pick them green for a crisp and mild version of the fully mature pepper. Banana peppers are the most flavorful during the yellow stage. Green banana peppers have a young flavor, and red banana peppers can be tough skinned.

If you harvest them when they are green but showing hints of turning yellow, they will turn color *off the plant* giving them a longer shelf life.

Storage & Preservation

Ripe banana pepper can be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. They are more frequently canned or pickled to preserve them for much longer. Canned sweet banana peppers are often called pepperoncini's and enjoyed in salads, on sandwiches, or eaten alone. Ripe peppers can also be frozen or dried.

Did you know peppers are one of the few vegetables which does not require blanching before freezing? Peppers tend to retain much of their flavor and texture in the freezer.

Continuous harvest

Pepper plants will continue to produce until the season cools or the days shorten. *Continuous picking* will encourage more pepper production. There will be different stages of fruit on the plant all at one time. You can leave some peppers to ripen to a yellow or red stage and harvest others when they're green.

Green Beans

Green beans, whether you are growing pole beans or bush beans, are very prolific producers, and can continually produce throughout the season with the proper care.

When to pick

Generally, **pole beans** should be ready to harvest from 50 – 60 days from the time the seedlings sprout, and **bush beans** should be ready in 50 – 55 days.

A common rule of thumb for harvesting most varieties of green beans is the pod is ready to harvest once it reaches a length of 4 to 7 inches long and the diameter is a little fatter than a pencil.

It is best to harvest green beans as they begin to reach the appropriate size. This will help promote more blooming and more production from the plant as the season progresses.

Waiting until you have a huge mess of green beans to harvest all at once can lead to some pods becoming overly mature, tough, and stringy.

Harvesting the green beans **early and often** helps to ensure your green beans are tender and tasty, plus your plants will have a chance to provide a continual production all season.



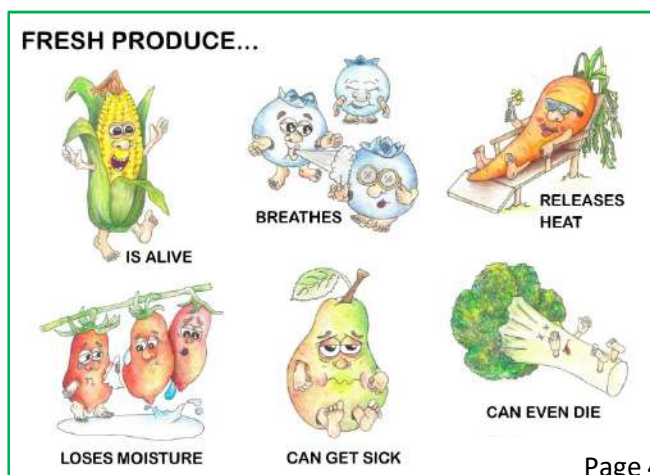
Storage & Preservation

Did you know green beans continue to respire* even after they have been harvested?

*See page 6 for more interesting information on vegetable respiration!

Storing fresh green beans in the refrigerator will slow the respiration rate, assisting to preserve their nutrients and keeping beans fresh for up to one week. Wrap the beans in a plastic bag, removing as much air from the bag as possible.

Also **DO NOT** wash your green beans before refrigeration because exposure to water will promote spoiling.



Spotlight on:

Brussel Sprouts

Snapshot

Brussels sprouts are a fall vegetable, requiring about 3 months to reach harvest size. Brussels sprouts can easily bear light frosts and they can even take freezing weather if the thaw afterwards is gradual. However, it is best to complete the sprout harvest soon after the first frost.

Starting

Brussels sprouts grow best in full sun where temperatures do not exceed 80°F. Plant in well-drained soil rich in organic matter. Add aged compost to the planting bed before planting.

Brussels sprouts can be sown directly in the garden, but for best results you may want to start them indoors. Plant Brussels sprouts so that they come to harvest in the cool of autumn. For the best planting date, count back from the average first frost date in autumn the number of days required to reach maturity for the variety you are growing; put your transplants in the ground on that date (when daytime temps are between 60-70 degrees).

Growing

Water and feed Brussels sprouts throughout the growing season. Keep Brussels sprouts evenly moist; do not allow the soil to dry out. Side dress Brussels sprouts with blood meal (high in phosphorus for strong root growth) and cottonseed meal (high in nitrogen for leaf and bud growth) when the sprouts first form. Sprouts form in each leaf axil (plants will continue to grow tall until temperatures stay below 40°F). For a large number of sprouts, let plants grow tall and continue to produce sprouts. For full, fat sprouts, pinch out the growing point to stop upward leaf growth and allow sprouts to form on the bottom 12 inches of the stem.

Harvesting and Storing

Brussels sprouts are most flavorful after the first frost in autumn but before freezing weather sets in for winter. Begin harvesting Brussels sprouts as soon as sprouts reach 1 inch in diameter. Do not let sprouts sit on the stem too long or the leaves will begin to open. Sprouts develop from the bottom up, so begin the harvest from the bottom of the plant or remove all of the leaves and harvest the whole stalk, cutting at ground level.

Common Problem

Keep an eye out for pests; handpick **caterpillars** that feed on foliage and spray away **aphids** with a strong stream of water. It is normal for lower **leaves to turn yellow**; simply remove them to expose the sprouts to more sunlight. (The sprouts form in each leaf axil, but the leaves do not need to be present for sprout development.) **Blackened stems** are likely a sign of a bacterial or viral disease, both of which will likely kill the plants. When water-conducting tissues inside the stem become infected, rot sets in and soon after the leaves will yellow and turn brown and the plant will fail. **Ants** are commonly a sign of other insects feeding on the plant, such as aphids. Carefully wash the leaves to remove insects; avoid overwatering. If your Brussels sprouts are small, your soil may be lacking in phosphorus—or may be too nitrogen rich. Add plenty of aged compost to your garden twice a year.



Suggested varieties: Early Snowball.

MORE RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Dorothy Krembs (#50) submitted a link to a great website that offers loads of valuable information no matter what time of year.

Take a look!

THE ULTIMATE GARDENING GUIDE: BASIC GARDENING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

“WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN BEFORE YOU STARTED GARDENING?”

https://www.superseeds.com/blogs/know-your-roots/basic-gardening-tips-for-beginners?utm_campaign=The%20Ultimate%20Gardening%20Guide%3A%20Basic%20Gardening%20Tips&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Klaviyo&ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJrcmVtYnNkb3JvdGh5QGdtYWlsLmNvbSlzICJrbF9jb21wYW55X2lkljogImdEdWZqdjJ9

YouTube videos to give you some ideas on Late Season Planting!

“20 Crops you can still grow in August” from the MIGardener:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=538cfJRPqgA>

“6 Crops to plant in August for late summer harvest” from CaliKim29:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=538cfJRPqgA>

OK ... now for a bit of science but interesting ... REALLY!

What happens to a vegetable when it is harvested?

When vegetables are harvested, they have a reserve of protective nutrients. Since the vegetable is no longer “alive”, it cannot replenish these nutrients. When these nutrients are used up, the vegetable will spoil. How are these nutrients *used up*? **Did you know** vegetables continue to respire (breathe) after harvest? So, the key to maintaining vegetables’ freshness is to *minimize their respiration rate* by storing them at a *cooler temperature*. The faster a vegetable respire, the more easily it will spoil and the more important it is to store it correctly.

VEGETABLE	MG/KG/HR
Onions	8 mg/kg/hr
Potatoes	17 mg/kg/hr
Cabbage	42 mg/kg/hr
Carrots	25 mg/kg/hr
Romaine Lettuce	101 mg/kg/hr
Green Beans	130 mg/kg/hr

Different vegetables have different respiration rates. Now you can see why your Onions and Potatoes keep fresh longer (at room temperature: 68F degrees) than lettuce or beans!