

# Harvest Homecoming

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## Harvest Hints

**Apples:** When you touch a ripe apple, regardless of variety, it should need only a slight pull to fall off the branch.

**Beans:** Pick before the pods begin to swell and when the strings are still slender. Pick often to encourage more bean development.

**Beets:** Pull when beets are 1 ½ inch to 2 inches in diameter. Cut off the tops to use in cooking or chop into salads.

**Carrots:** Whether you are growing orange, purple, yellow, or white carrots, loosen the soil when they are ½-1 inch thick, then pull.

**Cucumbers:** Harvest cucumbers when they are shiny and small. The bigger they get, the more bitter and seedy they become. Lemon cucumbers will be slightly yellow while English and Armenian cucumbers will be green. Frequent picking encourages more growth.

**Eggplants:** Young eggplants are the tastiest and sweetest. Their flesh is glossy purple. Do not pull eggplants. Cut with a sharp knife.

**Fennel:** Cut bulbing fennel at the soil line. Use the bulb as well as the ferny leaves in recipes.

**Grapes:** If you are growing grapes, you know when they are ready to be harvested by doing a taste test. Don't pull the bunch from the vine. Use a sharp knife to cut individual bunches.



*A basket of fresh picked tomatoes.*



*Eggplant, zucchini, beans, lettuces, and tomatoes are ready for the table.*

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**Kale:** As long as you leave six to eight leaves of the kale on the stem, you can start picking kale as soon as it is established. Kale grows quickly and will continue to send out more leaves.

**Peppers:** For the ultimate in flavor and sweetness, allow peppers to grow to their deepest colors of green, red, yellow, orange, and purple. Twist and pick whatever size you wish.

**Pumpkins:** Try to pierce the skin of a pumpkin with your fingernail. If it is too hard, the pumpkin is ripe. Cut the stem at least 3 inches long and let the pumpkin cure for a week or more in the sun. Pumpkins will last a very long time when stored at 48-50 degrees in a dry environment.

**Tomatoes:** For the richest flavor, be patient and wait for your tomato to reach its full sun-ripened color for the specific variety. If rain threatens, pick your green tomatoes and leave on the counter. Most will ripen at room temperature. Whatever you do, never refrigerate tomatoes after picking or you'll lose nutrients and taste.