



TITLE: P#5a: PICK -- When to harvest cool season vegetables

Description: To have the best flavor, and most nutritional value, cool season veggies should be picked at the “optimum” maturity. Weather conditions may cause you to pick a little early or a little late. Don’t worry; your produce is still edible. When it is really too late, you will know, as your veggies just won’t taste very good.

Objective(s): Learn to recognize the signs of “optimum” maturity as discussed in the video.

Vegetable	Part Eaten	Too Early	Optimum Maturity	Too Late
Beets	Root and leaves	Insufficient size	Roots 2" to 3" in diameter	Pithy roots; strong taste
Broccoli	Immature bloom	Insufficient size	Bright green color; bloom still tightly closed	Loose head; some blooms beginning to show
Carrots	Root	Insufficient size	½" to ¾" at shoulder	Strong taste
Kale, Curly	Leaves	Insufficient size	Leaves about hand size	Leaves larger than size of hand; very tough
Lettuce, Head	Leaves	Head not fully formed	Fairly firm; good size	Heads very hard
Lettuce, Leaf	Leaves	Insufficient size	Leaves 3" to 5"	Leaves 6" or longer; bitter taste; plant starting to flower
Onions	Dry Bulb	Tops all green	Tops yellow; ¾ fallen over	All tops down; bulb rot started
Onions, Green	Small bulb and green stems	Stems smaller than #2 pencil	Tops all green, diameter less than ½"	Stems larger than ½" Tips turning brown
Peas, Shelling	Seed	Peas immature and too small to shell	Peas small to medium; sweet bright green	Yellowing pods; large peas
Peas, Snap	Seed and pod	Peas immature and too small	Seeds fully developed but still soft;	Hard seeds; dry pods
Spinach	Leaves	Insufficient size	Leaves 3" to 4"	Tough leaves

Additional Resources / References:

“When to Harvest Vegetables”, University of Georgia Extension Circular 935

https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%20935_4.PDF

“Harvest, Handling and Storage of Vegetable Produce”, University of TN, The Back Yard Series W346-I,

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W346-I.pdf>

“Storage of Fresh Produce”, University of TN Extension Publication SP 768-F,

extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/SP768-F.pdf

“Harvest Tips for the Freshest Vegetables”, Better Homes & Gardens, June 9, 2015,

<https://www.bhg.com/gardening/vegetable/vegetables/harvest-tips-for-the-freshest-vegetables/>

Knox County Master Gardeners website: www.knoxcountymastergardener.org

Knox County Master Gardeners Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/KnoxCountyMG>

Ask-a-Master Gardener / Knox County Extension Helpline: (865) 215-2340

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