

## Garden Harvest in August

Harvesting vegetables at the right stage is critical for optimum quality and taste. Pick stringless or garden green beans when pods are full-sized and when enclosed beans or seeds are about one-quarter of their mature size. Harvest them before they begin to shrivel. Harvest fresh lima beans when pods are well filled but not overmature. Mature seed or beans will be green and tender. Pick both lima and green beans often to encourage continuous production.



Allow dry shelled beans such as pinto, red kidney, Black Turtle or Great Northern varieties to mature on the vine until pods are dry and papery. Harvest pods before they shatter and let them dry in a paper sack. Most dry shelled beans are harvested when plants have lost at least 90 percent of their leaves. Beans will naturally separate from the pods after drying or they can be removed by hand. Dry beans are rich in protein and fiber.

Sweet corn is generally ready for harvest 18 to 24 days after the silk emerges from the ears. The kernels should be full and have a milky consistency when punctured. The silk should be brown and somewhat dry. Most ears with shucks will be slightly plump. Refrigerate picked ears immediately to maintain sugars and quality. Newer super sweet varieties will maintain sweetness longer.

Tomatoes can be picked once they turn pink, but most gardeners prefer harvesting them at full color for optimum flavor. Fruit should be firm. Pick green chile peppers when pods are full, shiny green to slightly red, and firm and crisp. Let dry red peppers turn completely red and dry on the plant. Pods can also be tied together in a ristra and hung up to dry.

Harvest bell peppers when they are full size, shiny green, and firm and crisp in texture. For colored fruit, leave peppers on the plant a little longer. Fruit color will vary depending on variety and can include red, yellow, orange and even purple. Pick eggplant when fruit is firm and glossy black to purple. Some varieties are white or light green. Harvest before skin toughens and seeds become large.

Many vegetables are harvested when relatively immature. Okra pods should be 3 to 4 inches long. Pickling cucumbers may vary from a couple of inches long to slightly larger, depending on the type of pickle desired. Slicing cucumbers should be 1.5 to 2.5 inches in diameter and 5 to 8 inches long. Yellow summer squash is best when young and tender. Let zucchini grow 6 to 8 inches long. A fingernail should easily penetrate the rinds of both. Mature winter squash is firm and glossy and resists denting with a fingernail. Butternut squash takes on a tan color, while acorn squash turns yellow to orange where it touches the soil.

Mature watermelon also develops creamy to yellow ground-spots where it touches the soil. The tendril, a corkscrew-like appendage where the stem attaches to the fruit, will wither when the fruit matures. When cantaloupe matures, the stem slips easily off. The fruit smells ripe and the background color turns from tan to orange.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact Ken Churches at [cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu) or (209) 754-6475 with your agricultural questions. To speak with a Certified Master Gardener: Calaveras (209) 754-2880, Tuolumne (209) 533-5696, Amador (209) 223-6837, El Dorado (530) 621-5543.