

# Home Garden Series

## Fall Harvest



A practical guide to determining when to harvest and how to store produce from your Louisiana fall vegetable garden

### Winter Squash

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs in September through October.

**Signals to Harvest:** The skin should be hard to the touch and resist puncture when you press a fingernail into it. The skin should be dull in color, not glossy. The stem should begin to dry out

**Store It:** Store in a dark and cool environment. Washing with a 10 percent bleach solution will help preserve the fruit.

### Lettuce and Spinach

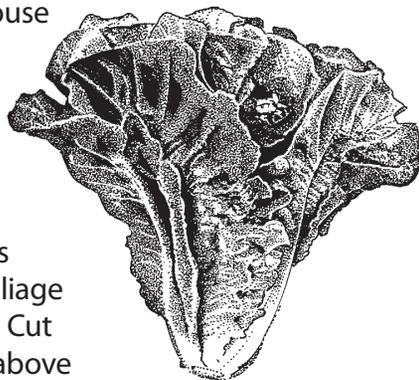
**In Season:** October to February is when most fall planted lettuce is ready. April to May is when most spring planted lettuce is available. Some growers seed lettuce year-round – if kept in a protected greenhouse with shade during the hot summer months.

#### Signals to

#### Harvest:

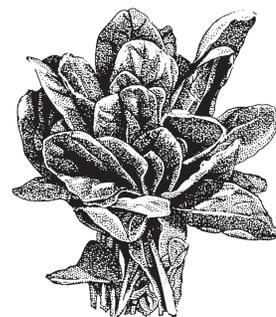
Leaf lettuce generally is harvested when foliage is 4 to 5 inches tall. Cut lettuce 1-2 inches above the soil line to have multiple harvests off one seeding. Leaf lettuce is a quick crop, with harvest generally coming 40-50 after seeding.

Head lettuce can be harvested when heads are firm – but not as firm as cabbage! This usually occurs 70-80 days after seeding. Cut heads even with the soil line. Prompt harvest will reduce bitter taste.



Spinach foliage should be very dark green. Harvest when leaves are 3-6 inches tall. Taller foliage is bitter. Leaving 1 inch of foliage will regenerate growth for a second harvest.

**Store It:** Store in the refrigerator in loose plastic wrap.



### Kale

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs October through February but it can be harvested before and after that, depending on planting time.

**Signals to Harvest:** Kale is ready to harvest anywhere from 75 to 100 days after seeding, depending on the variety planted. Harvest outermost leaves when the plant reaches 8 inches high. Start snapping off outermost leaves when they are very tender.

**Store It:** Store in the refrigerator in loose plastic wrap.



### Swiss Chard

**In Season:** Swiss chard generally is harvested from October through February but can be harvested before and after that, depending on planting time.

**Signals to Harvest:** Snap leaves off while

foliage is still tender. If you are growing chard for ornamental purposes, allow leaves to reach 10 inches in height for full stem color development.

**Store It:** Store in the refrigerator in loose plastic wrap.

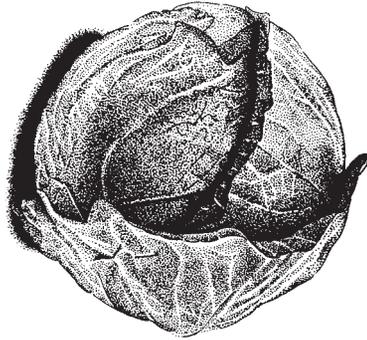
## Cabbage

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs from November through May, depending on planting time.

**Signals to Harvest:**

Cabbage heads should be full and firm. Press your thumb on top of the head. If it feels similar to the hardness of a softball, the head is ready to be harvested. If you can tell there is air space between leaves when pressing with your thumb, the head should be left until it feels firm. If the head is cracked or limp, it has passed maturity.

**Store It:** Store in a cool, dark location.



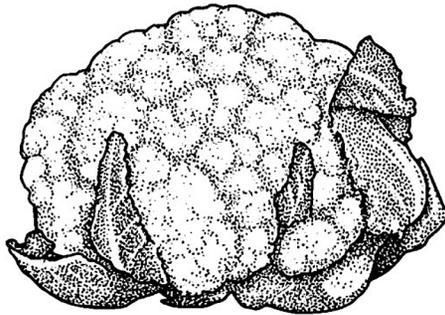
## Cauliflower

**In Season:**

Fall crops of cauliflower are in season from late November through Christmas, and the spring crop is harvested from March to April.

**Signals to Harvest:** Cauliflower should be harvested when the head is full and firm and, depending on type, at least 4 inches in diameter. Harvest when individual flower clusters or curds are tightly together and not separated.

**Store It:** Wrap in plastic and store in the refrigerator.



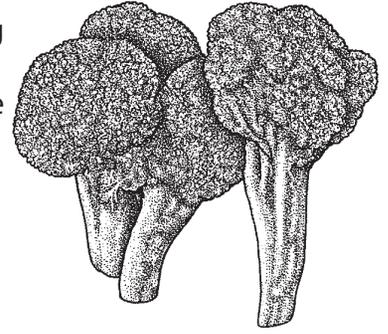
## Broccoli

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs from November through March if there are no freezing episodes.

**Signals to Harvest:** Broccoli should be dark green to blue, with compact tight buds. Stems and foliage

should be firm and not limp. If yellow is starting to show, you have passed the prime edible stage. At this point, discard the main head and begin harvesting side-shoots.

**Store It:** Wrap in plastic and store in the refrigerator.



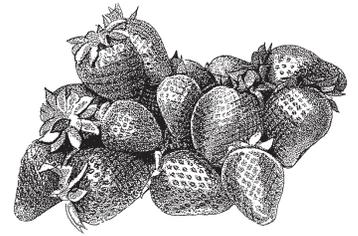
## Strawberries

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs mid-February through mid-May.

**Signals to Harvest:**

Berries should be fully red from shoulder to tip, with a nice aroma. The fruit should be firm. Remove from plant, leaving a portion of the stem attached.

**Store It:** Do not wash until you are ready to eat. Keep in the refrigerator.



## Shallots

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs from November through late May.

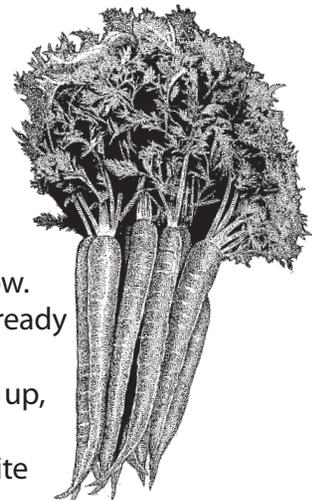
**Signals to Harvest:** Cut foliage as needed. Foliage should be the width of a pencil or slightly larger and at least 8 inches tall. As needed, divide bulbs and replant to keep foliage fresh.

**Store It:** Store in the refrigerator.

## Carrots

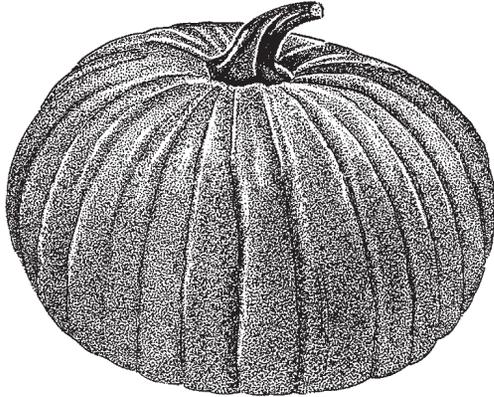
**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs from late November through March.

**Signals to Harvest:** Carrot tops do not provide any indication of the development of the roots below. Depending on variety, carrots are ready to harvest in two to three months. The top of the carrot often pushes up, exposing the top half-inch of root. Carrots range in color from off-white



to deep purple. Carrots that are colors other than orange will deepen their color with maturity. Carrots can be consumed at any stage of growth but have smooth skin and are firm when fully mature. Carefully dig carrots with a pitch fork so you don't break the long, slender roots.

**Store It:** Store in the refrigerator



## Pumpkins

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs from October through December.

**Signals to Harvest:** Pumpkins range in size shape and color. In general, the rind should be thick and resist puncture when you press your fingernail into it. The skin also should be rich in color but dull. The stem should start to dry out.

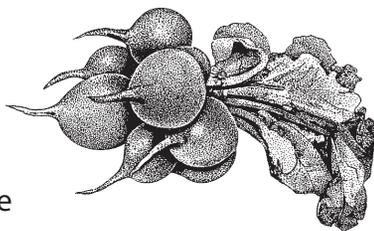
**Store It:** Store in a dark, cool area. Do not allow bottoms to get wet. If washing, do so in a 10 percent bleach solution.

## Radishes

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs from September through May.

**Signals to Harvest:** The roots should be round to oval and generally less than 2 inches in diameter. The skin should have a nice deep color and the foliage should be dark green and not wilted.

**Store It:** Store in a cool, dark location.



## Mustard, Turnip and Collard Greens

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs from late September through May.

**Signals to Harvest:**

Mustard and Turnip Greens: Harvest greens when they are 4-8 inches tall. Leave 2 inches of foliage to initiate a second crop.

Collard Greens: Snap off foliage from base of plant when tender.

**Store It:** Vigorously wash foliage and roots. Store on ice or in the refrigerator.



## Turnips (Roots)

**In Season:** Peak harvest occurs from late September through May.

**Signals to Harvest:** The turnip roots should be golf ball size or slightly larger. If any bigger, the turnip becomes tough and bitter. Turnips range in color, depending on variety, but skin should be a deep color and smooth.

**Store It:** Wash thoroughly. Store in a cool, dark location.

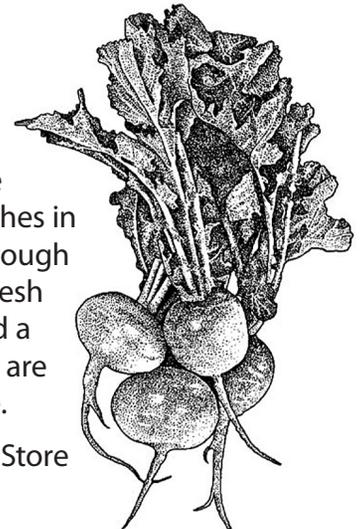


## Beets

**In Season:** Peak season occurs from late October through May.

**Signals to Harvest:** Beets can be harvested at any stage but generally taste better when roots are harvested at less than 3 inches in diameter. Larger roots are tough and not as palatable. The flesh should be firm, smooth and a deep color. Beets generally are red to purple when mature.

**Store It:** Wash thoroughly. Store in a cool, dark location.

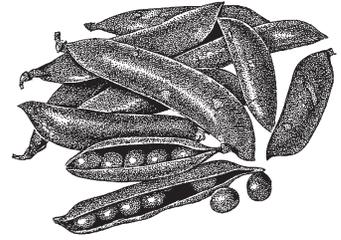


## English Peas

**In Season:** Peak season occurs in April for the spring crop and in November for the fall crop.

**Signals to Harvest:** For sugar snap peas, pick before the pods bulge. For Laxton types, allow the seeds to develop but not get hard before harvesting.

**Store It:** Store in the refrigerator.



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