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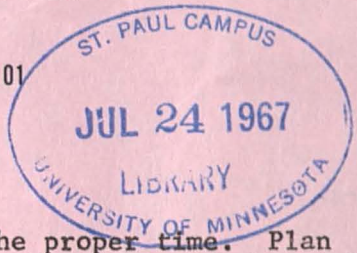
Yard 'n' Garden



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HARVESTING FOR QUALITY

Vegetable quality often depends on harvesting at the proper time. Plan to use vegetables promptly after harvesting to assure good quality. Vegetables such as sweet corn, beans, peas, cauliflower, broccoli deteriorate quickly, so immediate use is essential.

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Use the thumbnail test for sweet corn. If the kernels are fully filled out and in the milk stage, a watery substance will squirt out freely when the kernels are pressed with the thumbnail. The silks will also be dry and brown. This is the ideal stage for harvest.

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Harvest onions when at least two-thirds of the tops have fallen over normally. Don't break off the tops. Breaking off the tops will not promote ripening and may result in poor quality.

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Pick cucumbers when the fruit is slender and dark green, before the color starts to lighten. If cucumbers remain on the vine too long, seeds will get hard and production will diminish.

For pickles, use any cucumber variety when it has reached the size you want. Pick the fruit so a small part of the stem remains with each one.

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Muskmelons are ripe when the stem slips easily from the melon, leaving a clean scar. Watermelons are ready for eating when the underside turns yellow or when the skin near the stem end is hard to puncture with your thumbnail.

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