

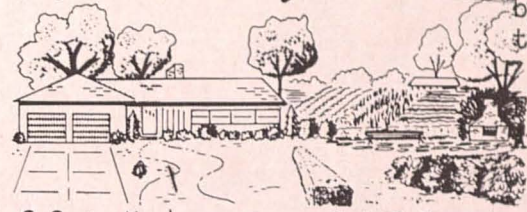
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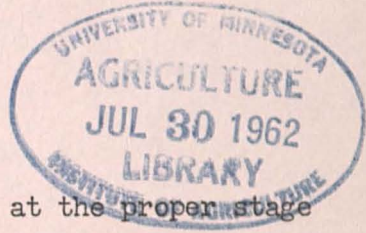
Yard 'n' Garden

Prepared and distributed
by the Minnesota Agricultural
Extension Service.



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AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA • ST. PAUL 1, MINNESOTA

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HARVESTING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

To get the most out of your garden, harvest your produce at the proper stage of maturity. Many vegetables like sweet corn, beans, peas, broccoli and cauliflower deteriorate rapidly after picking. They tend to dry out and the sugars change to less desirable starches. Quality cannot be improved after the produce is harvested but it can be maintained if the produce is cooled quickly.

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Allowing vegetables like beans, cucumbers and tomatoes to overmature on the vines will reduce the total yield of the plant.

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

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Leave tomatoes and melons on the vine until ripe. Pick tomatoes when they have a uniform red color and remove the stems before placing the fruit in the picking container. Often a simple twist of the wrist when picking tomatoes will leave the stem on the vine.

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Muskmelons are ripe when the stem slips easily from the melon, leaving a clean scar. Watermelons are ready when the underside of the fruits turn yellow or when snapping the melon with the fingers produces a dull, hollow sound.

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Use summer squash when it is 6 to 10 inches long and before the skin and seeds are hard. Winter squash, on the other hand, should be allowed to ripen on the vine. When the skin resists pressure of the fingernail at the stem end, the winter squash is ready for harvest.

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Cucumbers should be harvested with a little of the stem on the fruit so they will not shrivel or wilt rapidly.

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Pears should be picked before they become soft on the tree. Remove them when they are a little on the green side and allow them to ripen in a cool basement.

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Don't harvest apples for winter storage until the fruits have a good waxy covering to improve their keeping quality. Store only fruits that have not been bruised. Windfalls do not keep well.

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