



TITLE: P#5b: PICK -- When to harvest warm season, summer vegetables

Description: To have the best flavor, and most nutritional value, warm 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
Beans, Snap Bush	Pod and seed	Insufficient size	Turgid pods; seeds just visible	Fibrous pods; large seed
Beans, Pole	Green Pod and seed	Insufficient size	Bean cavity full; seed ¼ grown	Large seed; fibrous pods
Cantaloupes	Fruit	Stem does not want to separate from fruit	Stem breaks away easily and cleanly when pulled	Yellow background color; soft rind
Cucumber	Fruit	Insufficient size	Dark green skin; soft seeds	Skin beginning to yellow; hard seeds
Eggplant	Fruit	Insufficient size	High glossy skin; side springs back when mashed	Brown seeds; side will not spring back when mashed
Okra	Pod	Insufficient size	2" to 3" long; still tender	Fiber development; tough pods
Pepper, Red Sweet Bell	Pod	Chocolate-colored pods	Bright red and firm	Shriveled pod; leathery skin
Potato, Sweet	Root	Small size; immature	Most roots 2" to 3" in diameter	Early plantings get too large and crack; damaged by soil temperature below 50°F
Squash, Summer	Fruit	Insufficient size	Rind can be penetrated with thumbnail	Penetrating with thumbnail is difficult; large seed

Vegetable	Part Eaten	Too Early	Optimum Maturity	Too Late
Tomatoes	Fruit	<p>Red Tomatoes may be harvested in three stages:</p> <p>1) Breaker Stage: Mature green – tomato is firm and mature, color changes from green to light green, no pink color showing on blossom end. These tomatoes will store one to two weeks in the refrigerator.</p> <p>2) Pink – pink color about the size of a dime on the blossom end. At room temperature, these tomatoes will ripen in about three days.</p> <p>3) Ripe – tomato is full red but still firm. Should be used immediately.</p>		Fruit is soft or mushy
Watermelon	Fruit	Green flesh; green stem is difficult to separate	Melon surface next to the ground turns from a light straw color to a richer yellow	Top surface has a dull look

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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