

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Fall forward



Japanese eggplant, zucchini, lettuce, and more are harvested.

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Eggplants: Young eggplants are the tastiest and sweetest. Their flesh is glossy purple. Do not pull eggplants. Cut with a sharp knife.

Fennel: Cut bulbing fennel at the soil line. Use the bulb as well as the ferny leaves in recipes. If your fennel has yellow flowers, save the seeds for your culinary recipes.

Grapes: If you are growing grapes, you know when they are ready to be harvested by doing a taste test. Don't pull the bunch from the vine. Use a sharp knife to cut individual bunches.

Kale: Leave six to eight leaves of the kale on the stem when picking kale. Kale grows quickly and will continue to send out more leaves.

Peppers: For the ultimate in flavor and sweetness, allow peppers to grow to their deepest colors of green, red, yellow, orange, and purple. Twist and pick whatever size you wish.

Pumpkins: Try to pierce the skin of a pumpkin with your fingernail to determine ripeness. Cut the stem at least 3 inches long and let the pumpkin cure for a week or more in the sun. Pumpkins will last a very long time when stored at 48-50 degrees in a dry environment.

Tomatoes: For the richest flavor, be patient and wait for your tomato to reach its full sun-ripened color for the specific variety. When rain threatens, pick your green tomatoes, and leave them on the counter. Most will ripen at room temperature. Whatever you do, never refrigerate tomatoes after picking or you'll lose nutrients and flavor.

Leafy greens: Nutritious leafy greens like arugula, lettuce, Swiss chard, and spinach continue to sprout. Harvest as needed to augment



Harvested beets with tomato vine in the rear.

Photos Cynthia Brian

and accent your other edibles. The smaller the greens, the more concentrated the vitamins and minerals.

Keep in mind that the birds, squirrels, skunks, raccoons, deer, rabbits, and other critters are as excited about the fall harvest as you are. They may start their feeding frenzy before your yields are at their optimum ripeness. Be vigilant and if necessary, gather your bounty earlier than expected.

The end of crop harvesting heralds the beginning of autumn as a time for rejoicing. When I was a kid growing up on our farm, a barn dance signaled the finality of the harvest and time to rest from a season of working in the fields. In our communities, we celebrate with festivals and fairs that are filled with family fun. Fall is a delightfully delicious time of year with the abundance of farm-fresh fruits and vegetables ripe and ready. Pick, eat, enjoy!



Fennel blossoms and seeds are excellent for seasoning.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!