



## Extending Your Garden Produce into Winter

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The growing season will be over soon, but you may still have some apples on the tree, root vegetables in the ground and winter squash on the vine. Most produce should be harvested before the first frost. If you handle and store them correctly they can last for months in storage without taking up refrigerator space. There are several methods for storing hardier fruits and vegetables outdoors or in the basement, but each product will do best under certain temperature, humidity and ventilation conditions.

Let's look at some of the produce most commonly grown in a home garden that you could extend the life of with proper storage.

**Acorn Squash:** Harvest when mature before frost. The skin on mature winter squash is hard and impervious to thumbnail scratching. Leave 1 inch of stem. Storage Temperature 45-50°F, Storage Life 1-2 months. Most other winter squash should be cured for 10 days at 80-85 degrees (usually near a furnace) to harden rinds and heal surface cuts. Store at 55-60°F for 2-3 months.

**Apples:** Store loosely wrapped in plastic bags with lots of holes, in boxes, cellars, or insulated boxes in outbuildings at a temperature as close to 32°F as possible. Apples ripen about 4 times as fast at 50°F than at 32°F and become overripe rapidly at 70°F. Storage length depends on variety, varies from 2-7 months. (See factsheet referenced below for more details.)

**Cabbage:** After first frost, pull with root attached. Store in outdoor storage areas (pits, buried garbage cans, root cellar) with soil around roots. Do not store in basement because cabbage odor will spread through house. Storage Temperature 32°F, Storage Life 3-4 months.

**Root Crops including Beets, Carrots, Turnips, Parsnips, Rutabagas:** All can be stored in garden by mulching with 1 foot of hay or straw, if there are no rodents. Store rutabagas only outdoors because they give off odors. Other root vegetables can be stored in basement storage room. Dig when soil is dry. Cut plant tops ½ inch above crown. Store in layers of moist sand, peat, or sphagnum moss or in polyethylene bags with about four ¼ inch holes. Storage Temperature 32-40°F, Storage Life 3-4 months.

**Tomatoes, Red Sweet Peppers:** Pick tomatoes before frost. Sort for ripeness. Pack green tomatoes one or two layers deep in a shallow box for ripening. Separate with layers of paper or individually wrap each tomato. At 55°F mature green tomatoes will ripen slowly in 25-28 days. At 65-70°F tomatoes will ripen faster.

For storage conditions of other produce including cauliflower, kale, onions, garlic, potatoes, pears and more, see the factsheet "Storing Vegetables and Fruits at Home". The temperature and humidity each crop needs are given. This excellent factsheet includes plans for building outdoor and indoor (basement) storage areas, including in-garden storage, outdoor mounds or pits, plus detailed plans for building an insulated basement storage room. The factsheet is available at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County website:

<http://ccesaratoga.org/resources/storing-vegetables-and-fruits-at-home-indoor-outdoor-cold-storage>.