



Harvest & Storage

of home grown vegetables

ONIONS AND GARLIC: Harvest these bulbs as soon as the tops have died down. Cut off the withered tops, unless you plan to braid and hang them. For successful long-term storage, both garlic and onions should be placed in a single layer in shallow boxes to dry and cure in a warm spot - for about 10 days. Turn them often to thoroughly dry all the surfaces. When the skins are dry enough to rustle as they are turned, the bulbs are ready for storage. Remove any damaged or thick necked onions to the kitchen for early use - do not attempt to store them. Arrange loose cured onion and garlic bulbs in clean shallow boxes, and store both in a dark spot that stays cold and dry. Ideal temperatures are close to, but not below freezing.

POTATOES: Potatoes for storage are harvested when the plants' tops have fully matured and dried. Dig the tubers carefully and allow their surfaces to air-dry thoroughly, out of direct sun, before storing. Never wash potatoes or any other root vegetable before placing them in storage. Remove all pierced and damaged tubers to the kitchen for early use. Ideal storage conditions for potatoes are dark, humid and cool at 44 degrees to 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Cold temperatures below 38 degrees Fahrenheit can cause an undesirable sweetening. And as air circulation is important for successful storage, it's a good idea to place the tubers in slatted or shallow boxes.

TOMATOES: Fully ripened tomatoes (like sweet peppers) keep best in the 44 degree to 55 degree Fahrenheit temperature range. If placed in a cool spot, in the refrigerator for example, they should be left there until they're just about ready to be used, as chilling can cause some deterioration once the fruits begin to warm up. Green tomatoes, like unripe melons, need warmer temperatures over 55 degrees Fahrenheit to ripen nicely indoors. Usual room temperatures just slightly on the cool side are fine. The tomatoes should be fully sized up and ideally showing a little orange or red coloring for the best flavor development. However, unripe tomatoes that have at least begun to turn very light green will usually finish ripening satisfactorily indoors. For storage and ripening, the tomatoes should be thoroughly clean, either washed in a 1:10 bleach solution or wiped with a clean cloth rung out in such a solution and the fruits dried and stored in single layers out of direct sun.

WINTER SQUASH AND PUMPKINS: Harvest these when they have sized and colored up, and their skins are hard – light frosts are okay but harvest before the mercury drops below 20 degrees to avoid any softening of the skins that can invite rotting. Cut storage squash and pumpkins with a short length of stem, but don't use it as a handle. Wipe the fruits clean with a cloth rung out in a 1:10 bleach solution, and cure them just like onions and garlic - in a really warm spot for about 10 days to dry and harden their skins.

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Town & Country Gardens, Inc.

5800 S. Yellowstone Hwy. ▪ Idaho Falls, ID 83402 ▪ 522-5247

1300 East Oak ▪ Pocatello, ID 83201 ▪ 232-7985

www.tcgardens.com

