

# How to Harvest and Store Garden Vegetables



When the garden produce has matured, the work is not over. Don't let poor handling rot the products of a hard-earned gardening season. By following a few simple steps, home gardeners can prepare their vegetables for short and long-term storage.

## Harvesting vegetables

The first step to storing produce is harvesting healthy produce with clean tools. This helps vegetables last without spoiling, regardless of the storage method.

**Do not store rotting produce:** When harvesting, do not include rotting produce in the harvest bin. As the saying goes, one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch. If in doubt, throw it out.

**Clean tools:** Before and after harvest, disinfect harvest tools such as knives, snips, buckets, etc. The easiest way to do this is to spray and wipe off tools with isopropyl alcohol in a sprayer bottle. For containers, crates, and boxes, a bleach solution can be made. Receptacles should be wiped out, rinsed, and left to fully dry.

## Vegetable storage

Vegetable storage methods vary depending on the crop. Short-term storage means storing from several days to a few weeks. Long-term storage vegetables can be kept for many months when properly dried or cured. Two examples of long-term storage crops are onions and potatoes. Short-term storage crops are bell peppers and tomatoes. Preparation for storage differs between long and short-term storage vegetables.

### Short-term vegetable storage

Some short-term storage vegetables require rinsing when they are harvested and some should be rinsed immediately before they are eaten.



Leafy greens, such as kale, spinach, and arugula, require rinsing directly after harvesting and before they are put into short-term storage.



Garlic can be stored long-term and cured by drying in a shaded area with well-circulated air.



Tomatoes should be stored in dry, clean produce bins at room temperature and should only be rinsed immediately before consumption to prevent rotting. (Photo by Nick Frillman.)

**Rinse after harvest:** Greens – kale, spinach, chard, arugula, etc. – cabbages, and root vegetables – carrots, beets, turnips, etc. Rinse with cool water. Remove yellow or rotten leaves of cabbage before rinsing. Green and bulb onions can also be rinsed right away. Store these rinsed vegetables in the refrigerator.

**Rinse before eating:** Peppers, eggplant, and tomatoes should not be rinsed after harvest. If washed, they will rot sooner. Instead, harvest them into dry, clean produce bins. Store them out of the sun. Eggplant and tomatoes can be stored at room temperature. Store peppers in the refrigerator. Wash immediately before consumption.

## Long-term vegetable curing and storage

Curing is the process of preparing crops such as onions, potatoes, garlic, and shallots for long-term storage, which is necessary for many winter storage crops. Curing technique varies by crop.

**Potatoes and garlic:** Air dry in a shaded location with well-circulated air to cure.

**Onions, shallots, and winter squash:** Cure in direct sunlight with good air circulation for several days on a greenhouse shelf or outdoors on a tarp. When drying outside, be mindful of weather to avoid them getting wet.

**Storage:** Long-term storage crops can be packed in slotted wooden or plastic crates and stored in a cool, dark location with good air circulation. A basement is an ideal location for storage.

## Reference

Blog: [Extend garden vegetable shelf-life with proper harvest and storage](#)

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