

Free Beacon's Grow Guide Garden-to-Table Cookbook

A Complete Guide to Harvesting and Preparing Your Homegrown Vegetables



Watch the Original Video:

<https://youtu.be/CFrrDv4Z-Kg?si=Tg-xqXJ-MiiawUTd>



Zucchini

Harvesting Instructions

1. **Check daily** once plants start producing
2. **Pick when 6-8 inches long** for best flavor and texture
3. **Harvest regularly** to encourage continued production
4. Cut stem with knife or garden shears, leaving small stub

Nutritional Benefits

- **20 calories per cup**
- **High in potassium** for heart health and muscle function
- Good source of vitamin C and fiber

Preparation Ideas

Zoodles (Zucchini Noodles)

1. Wash and trim ends from zucchini
2. Use spiralizer or vegetable peeler to create noodle shapes
3. Salt lightly and let sit 10 minutes to draw out moisture
4. Pat dry with paper towels
5. Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in large skillet over medium-high heat
6. Sauté zoodles 2-3 minutes until just tender (don't overcook!)
7. Season with garlic, herbs, or your favorite pasta sauce

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Grilled Zucchini Slices

1. Cut zucchini lengthwise into ¼-inch thick slices
2. Brush both sides with olive oil
3. Season with salt, pepper, and herbs (thyme or oregano work well)
4. Preheat grill to medium-high heat
5. Grill 3-4 minutes per side until tender with nice grill marks
6. Finish with lemon juice and fresh herbs

Zucchini Muffins

1. Grate 1 cup zucchini (don't peel)
 2. Squeeze out excess moisture with clean kitchen towel
 3. Mix into your favorite muffin batter
 4. Bake at 350°F for 18-22 minutes until toothpick comes out clean
 5. The zucchini adds moisture and mild flavor without being detectable
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Cabbage

Harvesting Instructions

1. **Check for firmness** - heads should feel solid and tight
2. **Cut at the base** with sharp knife when heads are fully formed
3. **Leave root system** in ground for potential secondary heads
4. **Timing:** Usually ready 70-100 days after planting

Nutritional Benefits

- **25 calories per cup**
- **Packed with vitamin C** - more than oranges!
- Good source of vitamin K and fiber

Preparation Ideas

Fresh Coleslaw

1. Remove outer leaves and core from cabbage
2. Shred cabbage finely using knife or food processor
3. Grate 2 carrots for every 4 cups cabbage
4. Toss with salt, let sit 15 minutes to soften
5. Mix dressing: 3 tbsp vinegar, 1 tbsp sugar, 2 tbsp mayo (optional)
6. Drain excess liquid, add dressing and mix well

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7. Chill 30 minutes before serving for best flavor

Stir-Fried Cabbage

1. Cut cabbage into 1-inch wedges, keeping core attached
2. Heat 2 tbsp oil in large wok or skillet over high heat
3. Add cabbage wedges, don't overcrowd
4. Cook 2-3 minutes without stirring to get browning
5. Stir-fry another 2-3 minutes until tender-crisp
6. Season with soy sauce, garlic, or ginger to taste

Basic Sauerkraut

1. Shred 5 lbs cabbage finely
 2. Toss with 3 tbsp sea salt, massage until juicy (10-15 minutes)
 3. Pack tightly into clean jar, liquid should cover cabbage
 4. Weight down with clean stone or fermentation weight
 5. Cover with cloth, secure with rubber band
 6. Ferment at room temperature 1-4 weeks, tasting weekly
 7. Refrigerate when desired tanginess is reached
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Swiss Chard

Harvesting Instructions

1. **Cut outer leaves** when 6-8 inches long
2. **Leave center growing point** intact for continuous harvest
3. **Harvest regularly** - can produce for months
4. Cut stems close to base with clean knife

Nutritional Benefits

- **Only 7 calories per cup**
- **Loaded with vitamin K** for bone health
- Rich in vitamins A and C, magnesium

Preparation Ideas

Perfectly Sautéed Swiss Chard

1. Separate stems from leaves (stems take longer to cook)
2. Chop stems into ½-inch pieces
3. Roughly chop leaves into 2-inch strips

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4. Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in large skillet over medium heat
5. Add chopped stems first, cook 3-4 minutes until tender
6. Add minced garlic (2 cloves), cook 30 seconds
7. Add leaves, toss until just wilted (1-2 minutes)
8. Season with salt, pepper, and lemon juice

Swiss Chard Stems as Side Dish

1. Trim leaves, save for another use
2. Cut colorful stems into 3-inch pieces
3. Steam or sauté until tender-crisp (5-7 minutes)
4. Toss with butter, herbs, and a splash of balsamic vinegar
5. The stems have a sweet, celery-like crunch

Raw Chard Salad

1. Use only young, tender leaves (older leaves are tough)
 2. Remove thick stems, tear leaves into bite-sized pieces
 3. Massage leaves with 1 tsp olive oil and pinch of salt
 4. Let sit 10 minutes to soften
 5. Add to mixed green salads or use as base for grain bowls
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Cucumbers

Harvesting Instructions

1. **Pick at 6-8 inches long** for best texture
2. **Check daily** during peak season
3. **Don't let them turn yellow** - this indicates overripeness
4. **Regular harvesting** encourages more production

Nutritional Benefits

- **16 calories per cup**
- **95% water content** for natural hydration
- **Natural electrolytes** and vitamin K

Preparation Ideas

Crisp Cucumber Salad

1. Slice cucumbers very thin (use mandoline if available)
2. Salt slices lightly, let drain in colander 30 minutes

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3. Rinse and pat completely dry
4. Toss with thinly sliced red onion and fresh dill
5. Dress with rice vinegar, sugar, and a touch of olive oil
6. Chill at least 1 hour before serving

Quick Refrigerator Pickles

1. Slice cucumbers into ¼-inch rounds or spears
2. Layer in clean jar with fresh dill and garlic cloves
3. Heat equal parts water and white vinegar with 1 tbsp salt and sugar
4. Pour hot brine over cucumbers to cover
5. Cool to room temperature, then refrigerate
6. Ready to eat in 24 hours, best after 3 days
7. Keeps refrigerated for 2-3 weeks

Cucumber Infused Water

1. Slice cucumbers into thin rounds
 2. Add to pitcher with cold water
 3. For extra flavor, add mint leaves, lemon slices, or lime
 4. Refrigerate 2-4 hours for mild flavor, overnight for stronger taste
 5. Muddle herbs gently to release more flavor
 6. Strain before serving or leave ingredients in for presentation
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Bulls Blood Beets

Harvesting Instructions

1. **Harvest roots** when 1-3 inches wide
2. **Pick greens early** for tender salad additions
3. **Twist off greens** leaving 1-2 inches of stem
4. **Store separately** - greens wilt faster than roots

Nutritional Benefits

- **37 calories per cup**
- **Loaded with folate** for cell health
- Good source of fiber and nitrates

Preparation Ideas

Perfect Roasted Beets

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1. Preheat oven to 400°F
2. Trim beet greens, leaving 1 inch of stem (save greens!)
3. Scrub beets clean but don't peel
4. Wrap each beet individually in foil with 1 tsp olive oil and salt
5. Roast 45-60 minutes until tender when pierced with fork
6. Cool slightly, then rub off skins with paper towel
7. Slice and serve warm with goat cheese and walnuts

Quick Pickled Beets

1. Cook small beets until tender (boil 30-40 minutes)
2. Cool, peel, and slice into rounds
3. Heat ½ cup vinegar, ¼ cup water, 2 tbsp sugar, 1 tsp salt
4. Add warm beets to brine
5. Cool completely, then refrigerate
6. Ready in 4 hours, best after overnight
7. Keeps 2-3 weeks refrigerated

Fresh Beet Juice

1. Scrub and quarter raw beets (no need to peel)
 2. Run through juicer with apple or carrot for sweetness
 3. Start with small amounts - beet juice is potent!
 4. Drink immediately for best nutrition
 5. Mix with lemon juice to brighten flavor
 6. Note: May temporarily turn urine pink (completely harmless)
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Potatoes

Harvesting Instructions

1. **Wait until foliage dies back** naturally
2. **Dig from the sides** to avoid damaging tubers
3. **"Rob" early potatoes** by feeling around plants for baby potatoes
4. **Cure in dry, dark place** for 1-2 weeks before long-term storage

Nutritional Benefits

- **110 calories per medium potato**
- **Packed with potassium** and vitamin C
- **Keep skin on** for extra fiber and nutrients

Preparation Ideas

Perfect Baked Potato

1. Scrub potatoes clean, leave skin on
2. Pierce all over with fork (8-10 times)
3. Rub skin with coarse salt and olive oil
4. Bake at 425°F for 45-60 minutes until skin is crispy
5. Test doneness by gently squeezing (should give slightly)
6. Cut open immediately while hot
7. Fluff flesh with fork, top with butter, herbs, or cheese

Crispy Roasted Potatoes

1. Cut potatoes into 1-inch chunks (leave skin on)
2. Soak in cold water 30 minutes to remove excess starch
3. Drain and pat completely dry
4. Toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, and herbs (rosemary or thyme)
5. Spread on baking sheet, don't overcrowd
6. Roast at 425°F for 30-40 minutes, flipping once
7. Cook until golden brown and crispy outside, fluffy inside

Rustic Mashed Potatoes

1. Cut potatoes into uniform pieces (keep skins on)
 2. Start in cold, salted water, bring to boil
 3. Cook 15-20 minutes until fork-tender
 4. Drain well and let sit 2 minutes to dry out
 5. Mash with potato masher (leave some chunks for texture)
 6. Add warm milk or cream gradually until desired consistency
 7. Season with salt, pepper, and butter
 8. The skins add fiber, nutrients, and rustic appeal
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Gypsy Peppers

Harvesting Instructions

1. **Pick green** for crunchy texture and mild flavor
2. **Let ripen** to red/yellow for sweetness
3. **Regular picking** encourages more pepper production
4. Use scissors or knife to cut stem

Nutritional Benefits

- **30 calories per cup**
- **More vitamin C than oranges**
- Good source of vitamin A and antioxidants

Preparation Ideas

Raw Pepper Strips with Dip

1. Wash peppers and pat dry
2. Remove stems and seeds
3. Cut into ½-inch wide strips lengthwise
4. Serve with hummus, ranch, or homemade yogurt dip
5. For yogurt dip: mix Greek yogurt with herbs, garlic, and lemon
6. Peppers keep their crunch and maximum vitamin C when raw

Fire-Roasted Peppers

1. Place whole peppers directly over gas flame or under broiler
2. Turn frequently until skin is charred all over (8-10 minutes)
3. Place in bowl and cover with plastic wrap to steam
4. Let cool 15 minutes, then peel off charred skin
5. Remove seeds and slice into strips
6. Drizzle with olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and fresh basil
7. Use in sandwiches, salads, or pasta dishes

Stuffed Gypsy Peppers

1. Cut tops off peppers, remove seeds and membranes
2. If peppers won't stand upright, trim small slice from bottom
3. Fill with mixture of cooked rice, ground meat, onions, and herbs
4. Top with cheese if desired
5. Place in baking dish with ½ inch water
6. Cover with foil, bake at 350°F for 45-55 minutes
7. Remove foil last 10 minutes to brown tops

Jalapeños

Harvesting Instructions

1. **Pick green** for maximum heat level
2. **Let ripen to red** for sweeter, milder flavor

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3. **Regular picking** keeps plants producing
4. **Wear gloves** when handling to avoid burning hands

Nutritional Benefits

- **Only 4 calories per pepper**
- **Packed with vitamin C** and capsaicin
- Capsaicin may boost metabolism and reduce inflammation

Preparation Ideas

Fresh Jalapeño Salsa

1. **Safety first:** Wear gloves when handling jalapeños
2. Remove stems, seeds for less heat (keep seeds for more heat)
3. Finely dice 2-3 jalapeños
4. Combine with diced tomatoes, onion, cilantro, and lime juice
5. Add salt to taste and let flavors meld 30 minutes
6. Start with less jalapeño - you can always add more heat!
7. Keeps refrigerated 3-5 days

Quick Pickled Jalapeños

1. Slice jalapeños into 1/8-inch rings (wear gloves!)
2. Pack into clean jar with garlic cloves
3. Heat 1/2 cup each vinegar and water with 1 tbsp salt and sugar
4. Pour hot brine over jalapeños to cover
5. Cool to room temperature, then refrigerate
6. Ready in 1 hour, best after 24 hours
7. Perfect for tacos, burgers, and nachos

Fire-Roasted Jalapeños (Milder Heat)

1. Place whole jalapeños on grill or under broiler
2. Char skin all over, turning frequently (5-8 minutes)
3. Place in plastic bag to steam for 10 minutes
4. Peel off charred skin with gloves
5. Remove seeds for mild heat, keep some for medium heat
6. Slice and use in dishes - roasting reduces heat and adds smoky flavor
7. Freeze roasted jalapeños for year-round use

Storage Tips

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Short-term: Most vegetables keep 3-7 days in refrigerator crisper drawer

Long-term preservation options:

- Freezing (blanch first for most vegetables)
- Dehydrating
- Canning
- Fermentation

General Harvesting Guidelines

- **Harvest in morning** when plants are fully hydrated
- **Use clean, sharp tools** to prevent disease
- **Handle gently** to avoid bruising
- **Store properly** to maximize freshness and nutrition

Happy gardening and cooking! Regular harvesting not only provides fresh food but encourages plants to keep producing throughout the growing season.

Beacon's GrowGuide

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