

How to Harvest, Cure and Store 20 Storage Crops

Learn how to harvest, cure and store 20 favorite storage crops — from beans and potatoes to cabbage and carrots.

Crops for Cool Storage (45-60 degrees F)

These easy-to-store crops are best kept in a cool place, which could be a basement, an unheated bedroom or an attached garage.

	Harvesting and Curing	Storage
Dry beans	Gather pods as they dry to tan and plants turn yellow, but before pods shatter. Dry whole pods in a warm, dry place until crisp. Shell beans and continue drying in open containers at room temperature for two weeks.	Store in airtight jars in a cool, dark place. Freezing dried beans kills any insects present.
Grain corn	Gather ears after the plants and husks dry to tan, but before the weather turns cool and damp. Remove husks. Dry ears in a warm, well-ventilated place for at least a week. Continue to dry until half of the kernels fall when ears are twisted between two hands.	Store whole, dry ears in boxes or bins in a cool, dry place. Bring batches into a warm spot near radiant heat for a few days to lower moisture content, which will make it easier to remove kernels.
Garlic	Dig, then pull when plant is still 60 percent green. Fewer than six leaves should appear healthy. Cure in a warm (80 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer), well-ventilated place for at least two weeks. Trim back tops to 4 inches, and then cure another week. Trim again before storing.	Store in boxes or mesh bags in a cool place with moderate humidity, such as a cool basement.
Onion	Pull when at least half of the tops are	Store in boxes or mesh bags in a cool

	<p>dead or have fallen over. Avoid harvesting in wet weather.</p> <p>Cure in a warm (80 degrees or warmer), shady, well-ventilated place for a week.</p> <p>Trim back tops, and then cure two weeks more. Trim again before storing.</p>	<p>place with moderate humidity.</p>
Potato	<p>Harvest before soil temperatures fall below 55 degrees to minimize bruising.</p> <p>Protect from sun.</p> <p>Wash only to remove clods of soil.</p> <p>Cure in a cool, dark, moist place (55 to 60 degrees) for two to three weeks.</p>	<p>Store in closed boxes or cloth-covered baskets in a cool place with moderate humidity, or store in buried containers.</p>
Pumpkin	<p>Cut ripe fruits from the vine, leaving a short stub of stem attached. Wipe with a damp cloth to remove soil. Cure in a well-ventilated place with warm room temperatures (70 to 80 degrees) for one to two weeks.</p>	<p>Store in bushel baskets or on shelves in a cool place with moderate humidity.</p>
Shallot	<p>Pull when the tops are at least half-dead. Avoid harvesting in wet weather. Cure in a warm (80 degrees or warmer), well-ventilated place for a week. Trim back tops, and then cure two weeks more.</p>	<p>Store in boxes or mesh bags in a cool place with moderate humidity.</p>
Sweet potato	<p>Dig while the weather and soil are still warm, at least a month before your first fall frost. Cure in a warm (85 degrees or warmer), humid place for one to two weeks until all skin wounds have healed.</p> <p>For perfect conditions, place jugs of hot water into</p>	<p>Store at cool room temperature (55 to 60 degrees) and moderate humidity. Avoid chilling.</p>

	a large cooler.	
Winter squash	Cut ripe fruits from the vine, leaving a short stub of stem attached. Wipe with a damp cloth to remove soil. Cure in a well-ventilated place with warm room temperatures (70 to 80 degrees) for one to two weeks.	Store in bushel baskets, shallow containers or on shelves in a cool place with moderate humidity.

Crops for Cold Storage (32-45 degrees F)

Very low refrigerator temperatures (32 to 35 degrees) prolong the storage life of these fruits and vegetables, but many can also be stored in slightly higher temperatures using time-tested, low-tech methods. According to Iowa State University, these crops can be stored for at least two months when provided proper conditions.

	Harvesting and Curing	Storage
Apple	Pick when seeds are dark brown and fruits come away with a moderate tug. Choose mid- and late-season apples for storage. Sort carefully to remove blemished fruits. Wrap best fruits individually in paper. Promptly refrigerate to slow the ripening process.	Store in refrigerator or another very cold place, in perforated plastic bags or waxed boxes to maintain high humidity. Check weekly.
Beet	Harvest before hard freeze. Trim tops to one quarter-inch, but do not trim roots. Wash in cool water. Pat dry.	Refrigerate beets in plastic bags or pack in damp sand in a sealed container and store in a cold basement, garage or root cellar.
Cabbage	Harvest before outermost leaves start losing color, or before hard freeze. Remove outer leaves.	Refrigerate in plastic bags or plant trimmed cabbage heads with roots attached in buckets of damp sand in a root cellar or cold greenhouse.
Carrot*	Harvest before hard freeze. Trim tops to one half-inch. Wash gently in cool water. Pat dry. Refrigerate in plastic bags.	Refrigerate or pack in damp sand in a sealed container and store in a cold basement, garage or root cellar.

Celeriac*	Harvest before hard freeze. Trim tops to one quarter-inch and cut off long roots. Shake off soil but do not wash. Refrigerate in plastic bags.	Refrigerate or pack in damp sand in a sealed container and store in a cold basement, garage or root cellar.
Celery	Before hard freeze, lift plants with soil attached to roots. Transplant to a shallow bin or bucket, or a bed in a cold greenhouse. Keep celery roots moist to wet, but keep foliage dry. Harvest stalks as needed by cutting them with a sharp knife.	Store celery in a cool garage or greenhouse and harvest stalks until only small hearts remain. Plants that make it through winter can be replanted outdoors in spring. Established plants are often hardy to Zone 7 and do not require lifting.
Leek	Dig, and then pull leeks before hard freeze. Transplant to a shallow bin or bucket, or a bed in a cold greenhouse. Trim back tops by half their length after transplanting. Move to a cold place where the roots will not freeze.	Store leeks in a cool garage or greenhouse and harvest as needed until they are gone. Replant trimmed-off roots to a tray of lightly moist soil. Most will grow into new plants.
Parsnip*	Leave some parsnips in the ground to dig in early spring. Harvest most before hard freeze. Trim tops to one half-inch, wash in cool water. Pat dry. Refrigerate in plastic bags.	Parsnips can be kept refrigerated in plastic bags, or packed in damp sand in a sealed container and stored in a cold basement, garage or root cellar.
Pear	Pick as green fruits turn a lighter shade of green. Seeds should be medium to dark green, with fruits quite hard. Cure in a cool, 40- to 50-degree place for a week to promote even ripening. Sort carefully to remove blemished fruits. Wrap best fruits individually in paper.	Store in refrigerator or very cold place, below 40 degrees, in perforated plastic bags or waxed boxes to maintain high humidity. Check weekly.
Rutabaga*	Harvest before hard freeze. Trim tops to one half-inch; also cut off taproot. Wash in cool water.	Rutabagas can be kept refrigerated, or packed in damp sand in a sealed container and stored in a cold basement,

	Pat dry. Refrigerate in plastic bags in the refrigerator.	garage or root cellar.
Turnip*	Harvest before hard freeze. Trim tops to one half-inch, but do not trim roots. Wash in cool water. Pat dry. Refrigerate in plastic bags.	Refrigerate or pack in damp sand in a sealed container and store in a cold basement, garage or root cellar.
<i>*Sensitive to ethylene gases given off by apples and other fruits.</i>		
