

VEGETABLE HANDLING & STORAGE GUIDE

Janet Gamble, Turtle Creek's Farm Manager, compiled this essential and comprehensive guide that will come in handy all season long. Taking the time to process your weekly share will create convenience in the long run!

Greens

All your greens have been hydro-cooled but will still require thorough washing to remove excess sand or soil. The secret to long-lasting greens is to store them very dry. Any moisture left on stored greens will speed up the rotting process!

Investing in a salad spinner is a necessary must when eating seasonal greens. I have an OXO brand that can serve as a storage bin, too. You may also use any reusable storage containers that are air-tight. Plastic bags that are twist-tied are also practical and reusable. You may also use the "Green Bags" that are made from recycled plastic and do not out-gas. You can purchase them from Wal-Mart but food co-ops carry them, too.

Swiss chard stalks can be eaten; no need to discard them before washing and storing. They add texture and color to salads and dips.

Once the greens are spun dry, store them in an air-tight container of choice. The greens will be ready to eat so you won't have to prep them again. I have kept greens this way for weeks!



Root Crops

Remove greens right away from your root crops. Leaving greens on the roots will draw moisture out of the roots resulting in a rubbery product.

Wash your roots—it's really okay—they will not rot. This only applies to very long storage. Your refrigerator will be much cleaner, too. Put dry

roots in a bag or air-tight container. Roots are dormant for a certain length of time so you may not have to worry about any sprouting right away.

Most root greens are edible with the exception of carrot greens and the larger fresh onion greens that may be too tough to use.



Green Beans

Do not pre-wash your beans before storage or they will discolor to a horrid brown. Store beans dry and in the bags they come in and wash before using.

Summer Squash, Eggplant, Peppers, Cucumbers

These crops can be stored dry and in the crisper drawer. Unfortunately, these vegetables do not like cold temperatures—they prefer about 50-55 degrees. Refrigerators are generally 42 degrees. Crisper drawers may be a little warmer than the back of the fridge or the shelves. Cold will damage and compromise the longevity of these vegetables, especially eggplant and summer squash.

Onions, Leeks and Garlic

The fresh onions you will be receiving these first weeks really do best in the refrigerator. Later in the season when you get dry onions (with skins on) you can store them in a dry, cool, dark place to retard sprouting. These have a dormancy that will keep

them from sprouting for months except for certain varieties.



You will be receiving storage (dry) onions later in the season. For the fresh bunching onions, cut the greens off before storing in fridge.

Leeks are fine with the greens left on until ready to use. Peel away the dry outer layer if necessary before using. If they are too large to fit into the fridge, you may cut off the green tops. Cut the white part lengthwise (the light green region is also fine to eat) and rinse if any sand or soil is present before using.

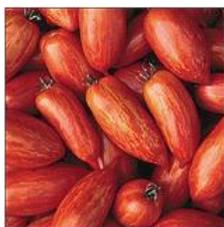
Garlic, once cured, will keep on your kitchen counter for months before sprouting.

Melons

I bet your fridge is getting pretty full by now! To save on space, remove the rind and seeds and cut into chunks and store in an air-tight container. This is also a great way to have a quick ready-to-eat snack.

Tomatoes

The tomato is another of those vegetables/fruits that doesn't like it cold and will retain its flavor by just putting it out on your counter. Be sure to examine them daily; any open wound will attract fruit flies. If you don't eat a whole tomato, turn it upside-down on a plate and put in the fridge for later. This will keep it from turning slimy.



Herbs

You may also put herbs in a jar of water and keep on your window sill or kitchen counter. You will have to change the water daily. Even though they

make a nice bouquet, they won't last as long as keeping them in the fridge. As an exception, basil prefers to be at room temperature and will do better in a jar of water on the counter and will keep it from turning brown in the cold fridge.

Berries

All berries should be kept in the fridge in the containers they come in and never washed until ready to eat. Leave the stems on the currants until ready to eat.

Winter Squash



You can put these in the garage. Winter squash likes it cool and dry. In fact, winter squash, onions, and garlic can all be kept in an attached garage (against the house wall). This is a perfect environment for the dry cold storage crops.

Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Broccoli, Cauliflower

Don't pre-wash before storing in the fridge. Pull Brussels sprouts off the stalk before storing. You can remove any discolored leaves and woody stem. Store in an air-tight container and wash before cooking.

Odds 'n Ends

Celery can be washed and cut into sticks stored in a water glass in the fridge ready for a quick snack. It can also be left whole and stored in a plastic bag twist shut and washed when ready to use.

Fennel bulb will need to have its stalks cut off. You may salvage the fennel leaf for additional flavoring. Store in the crisper drawer.

