



REGENERATIVE
design a meaningful life doing what you love

8 Fruits Harvesting Guide





There are few more satisfying activities on the permaculture plot than eating ripe fruit directly from the plant. Plucking an apple from the bough of a tree and crunching into it, standing there in the open air; or easing a pear from its stalk to take back to the kitchen and slice over your breakfast cereal; or getting your fingers stained with the juice of ripe strawberries or raspberries as you harvest the sweet bombs of flavour – these are some of the intensely pleasurable experiences that come with cultivating fruit on your site.

To fully appreciate them – and to ensure they are at their tastiest and most nutritious – it is important to know when to do fruits harvesting. This avoids picking unripe fruit that is harder to use in the kitchen, or allowing fruit to go overripe and so end up in the compost pile. Here is a guide about the visual and textural clues to look for so you know when various fruits are ripe for the picking.

Cantaloupe

The first sign that a cantaloupe is becoming ready for harvest is that the 'netting' that covers the surface will become more pronounced and turn beige from its previous green colour. Also, the blossom end of the

fruit should give a little under pressure, and should smell sweet. If you think a fruit is ready to go, give it a little pull; if it is ripe it will come easily away from the stem.

Watermelon

Watermelons have a curly tendril that protrudes from the stem of each fruit-bearing branch. This tendril drying up and turning brown is a signal the fruit is ready for harvest. The other signs that you should harvest the fruit are that the underside that is in contact with the ground will turn yellow or cream in colour, the skin loses its shine and becomes difficult to penetrate with your fingernail, and if you give the melon a tap it will have a resonant sound. Store for a couple of days at room temperature to ripen to optimum taste.

Pear

Pears are actually one of the fruits that it is preferable to harvest a few days before optimum ripeness, allowing them to reach perfection in a bowl indoors and giving you a longer timeframe in which to eat them (if the pear ripens fully on the tree, it will start to spoil within just a day or two of picking). Pears are ready for harvest when the green colour starts to lighten and go yellow. The flesh should still be hard, but if you twist the

fruit it should come easily away from the stem. Keep in a bowl in a location between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit and test for ripeness each day. When you press the neck of the pear with your thumb and it gives a little, they are ready to eat. If you want to keep the pears for longer before eating, store in the refrigerator.

Apple

With so many different varieties of apple, it can be tricky to know when your particular variety is ready to harvest. Juvenile apples tend to be green, so if you are cultivating a yellow or red variety, you will see the green change to these mature colours. But, of course, some apples remain green even when mature. So for all apples, the best test is to test how easily the fruit comes off the tree. A ripe fruit will come away easily, with the stem still attached. If a few mature fruits have fallen from the tree, chances are the others are about ready to go. Another check is to open up an apple at the base and check the colour of the flesh – a mature fruit will have paler green colour to its flesh; juveniles are brighter green.

Blueberries

A blueberry is ripe when the fruit is uniformly blue-purple in colour; if you can still see a ring of red around the point where the stem meets the fruit, leave on the plant. If the berry is ripe it should come away in your hand with almost no pressure. A ripe blueberry does not need any pulling to be harvested. In fact, the best way to gather the fruit is to gently roll each one away from the cluster into the palm of your hand.

Peach

Peaches should be left on the tree until they are fully ripe. This will ensure the best flavour and texture, as once picked the fruit starts to deteriorate rather than continuing to ripen in a bowl. When growing peaches have green skin; when these change colour completely, the fruit is mature. The skin will turn a different colour depending on the variety you are cultivating. Yellow-fleshed species will go orange, while those with white flesh will see the skin go yellow-white. Eat soon after picking for the best taste, although peaches can be stored for a day or two in places with high humidity.

Cherries

Cherries keep growing until they are fully mature, so they are ready to be picked when they are plump and almost straining at the skin. You want to ensure that the cherries are at peak ripeness before harvesting, as they do not continue ripening once picked. Sweet cherries will be quite firm to the touch, while sour varieties have a bit more give. Both however should come away from the tree easily when ripe, with the sour varieties detaching from their stems when gently tugged. However, with all varieties, if you wish to keep the fruit for longer than a day, pick with the stems intact. This will extend their prime for two or three more days, especially if stored in the refrigerator.

Strawberries

Pick strawberries that have turned at least three-quarters red. The rest of the fruit will develop this colour after picking if kept in a cool place over the next day or two. Do not harvest fruit that is half, or less, red, as

these will not be able to ripen after picking. Harvest early in the morning as the fruit is firmer then and less likely to be damaged during the harvesting process. Keep the stems and 'caps' in when you pick.