



A32 Storing produce



With a little luck and by following these simple techniques, you'll be able to store several types of vegetables and fruit to eat out of season. The following has tips and techniques for choosing the right produce for successful storage. Invite the school caterers and cooking clubs to help with these activities.

Resources

- Produce to store
- Storage facilities available throughout the likely storage period. Any rainproof space safe from pests, eg garages and sheds (if insulated to be frost free), basements, cellars and unheated rooms. Speak to the school's site manager or local community members for suggestions.

Activity

- 1 Look through your produce, handling carefully to avoid bruising.
- 2 Identify and put aside produce suitable for storing. Store only the following
 - a Not physically damaged (eg by tools) or with any sign of pest or disease attack (eg soft patches, entry holes from insects).
 - b Healthy looking and a good size; nothing weak, odd coloured, or in poor condition.
- 3 Follow instructions on the next page for storing particular produce.
- 4 Check produce regularly, preferably weekly. Remove anything showing signs of rot to stop it spreading. Reconsider storage conditions if lots of your produce is not storing well.

Extended activities

- 1 Use produce not suitable for storage in cooking activities in school and with the community.
- 2 Research ideas for making preserves and pickles from produce.
- 3 Plan next year's crop planting plan, deciding which crops could be stored. Also have a look at techniques for extending the harvest season (see B5.12).

Health & Safety	Follow Manual Handling guidance when lifting heavy trays of produce (B3.4). <i>See also Health and Safety Guidelines (Section B3.3)</i>
Further information	B5.12 Harvesting and storing produce Food Growing Instruction Cards Poster - Harvesting and storing

Instructions for storing produce

These techniques are for long term storage of suitable vegetables and fruits. Other produce will stay fresh for a few days in a refrigerator, eg tomatoes, salads and soft fruit; others are best left growing or in the ground, eg Brussels sprouts, leeks and hardy green cabbages.

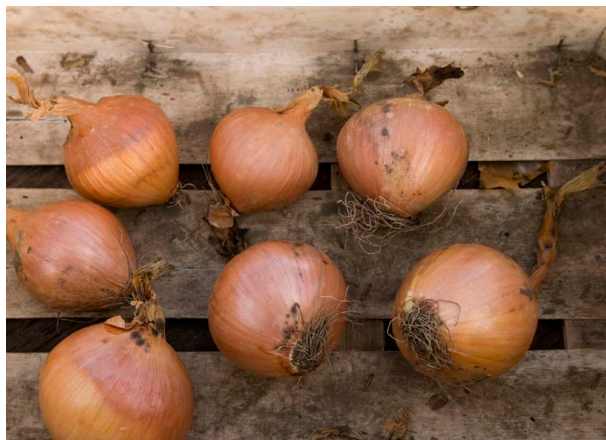
Onion, shallot, garlic

Ideal time Onions, shallots: after leaves have died down, usually August/September. Garlic when four to six outer leaves have turned yellow (July/August).

Preparation Lift carefully and dry in the sun until skins are papery and 'rustle' when handled (usually about three weeks).

Location Airy and light place (darkness encourages sprouting). Store in shallow trays or slatted shelves. Can also plait into 'ropes' and hang up.

Temperature 2-4°C



Pumpkin, winter squash, marrow

Ideal time Before the first frost in autumn.

Preparation Use larger mature fruit. Cut with a 10cm long stalk (this dries and protects the stem from rotting). Leave in the sun for 10 days to harden the skin before storing.

Location Dry, airy place on slatted shelves or hanging in nets.

Temperature 10-15°C



Potato (maincrop)

Ideal time Dry, cool weather in September/October

Preparation Leave tubers to dry for two hours after digging up before storing. Place gently in thick paper bags. Do not use plastic sacks as they cause condensation and rot.

Location Dark place to prevent potatoes sprouting and turning green.

Temperature 5-10°C (the starch turns to sugar below 5°C)



Cabbage (red and white)

Ideal time Before the first frosts in autumn

Preparation Dig up, handling carefully to avoid bruising

Location Dry, airy place on slatted shelves or hanging in nets

Temperature 1-4°C



Beetroot, carrot, parsnip, swede, turnip, kohlrabi

Ideal time Autumn; cool weather, or leave to cool down before storage

Preparation Remove leaves by twisting off rather than cutting. Remove excess soil gently to avoid skin damage. Washing may be necessary if grown in heavy clay soil (see B4.4) or if pest and disease damage is suspected.

Location Dry place in shallow wooden boxes in layers with damp leafmould, sand, or sieved soil between.

Temperature 0-4°C



Apples and pears

Ideal time Autumn; choose late season varieties for long term storage. Earlier varieties last 2-5 weeks.

Preparation Pick fruit with firm skins and stalks intact. Store each variety separately as they will ripen at slightly different times. Inspect regularly and remove overripe or rotting fruit.

Location Cool, dark and airy place with some humidity. Store in shallow slatted boxes or place up to 2kg in large, loosely tied plastic bags with pencil size holes. Can wrap apples individually with tissue paper in crates (not pears).

Temperature 2-5°C (apples); 0-4°C (pears)

