

Harvesting and Storing Apples

Harvesting apples at the proper stage of development is the first step toward ensuring high quality garden produce that tastes great and stores well. If picked prematurely, apples are likely to be sour, tough, small and poorly colored; if picked overripe, they may develop internal breakdown and store poorly.

To harvest apples correctly, you must be familiar with the term "ground color." Ground color is the color of an apple's skin, disregarding any areas that have become red. In red-fruited cultivars, observe the portion of the apple facing the interior of the tree. When the ground color of red cultivars changes from leaf green to yellowish green or creamy, the apples are ready to harvest. In yellow cultivars, the ground color becomes golden. Mature apples with a yellowish-green background color are suitable for storage.

Apples that will be eaten immediately, may be ripened on the tree. Apples that are to be stored, should be picked when hard but mature, showing the mature skin color but with a hard flesh. Therefore, storage apples will be harvested before fresh eating apples. Most apple cultivars have brown seeds when ready for harvest. However, seeds may become brown several weeks before proper picking maturity. When harvesting, do not remove the stems from apples that will be stored. Be sure to store only apples without bruises, insect or disease damage, cracks, splits or mechanical injury.

Many cultivars of apples store moderately well under home storage conditions for up to six months. Late-maturing varieties are best suited to storage. These apples can be stored in baskets or boxes lined with plastic or foil to help retain moisture. Always sort apples carefully and avoid bruising them. The saying 'one bad apple spoils the barrel' is true because apples give off ethylene gas which speeds ripening. When damaged, ethylene is given off more rapidly and will hasten the ripening of other apples in the container. Store apples at around 40 F. When stored at this temperature, apples may last for up to six months.

Apples often pass their odor or flavor to more delicately flavored produce and the ethylene given off by apples can accelerate ripening in other crops. When possible, store apples separately from other fruits and vegetables.



Things to do this month

By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Horticulture Extension Associate

Plant peonies now, but make sure the crowns are buried only 1½ to 2 inches below ground level. Planting them deeper than two inches may keep them from blooming.

Root cuttings from annual bedding plants such as begonias, coleus, geraniums and impatiens. These plants can be overwintered in a sunny window and provide plants for next year's garden.

Before the first frost, dig up caladiums. Allow them to dry and store them in a dry place for the winter.

Perennial phlox can be divided about every third or fourth year. Divide big clumps of perennial phlox into thirds. Early fall or early spring are the best times to plant or transplant them.

Divide lily-of-the-valley.

Select accent plants for your landscape that will provide autumn colors. Trees that have red fall color are flowering dogwood, red maple, sugar maple, Norway maple, red oak and scarlet oak. Shrubs with red fall foliage include sumac, viburnum, winged euonymus and barberry.

Allow plants to finish the summer growth cycle in a normal manner. Never encourage growth with heavy applications of fertilizer or excessive pruning at this time. Plants will delay their dormancy process that has begun in anticipation of winter in the months ahead. New growth can be injured by an early freeze.

Tree wound paints used after pruning are no longer recommended as they can slow healing and may promote decay.

If pesky seedlings of woody plants, such as elm, mulberry, hackberry or maple are found growing in your yard, remove them as soon as possible. If left too long, they will take over gardens and other landscape plantings.

Rake up leaves, twigs and fruit from crabapple trees and dispose of them in the trash to help control apple scab disease.

Water newly planted trees and shrubs to provide sufficient moisture and prevent winter damage. Add a two-inch layer of an organic mulch such as shredded bark around the base of plants to retain soil moisture and regulate soil temperature.

Wood ashes contain phosphorous, potassium and calcium. It can be placed on vegetable gardens and flower beds.

Save seeds from favorite flowers such as marigolds by allowing the flower heads to mature. Lay seeds on newspaper and turn them often to dry. Store the dry seeds in glass jars or envelopes in a cool, dry, dark place.

Hot peppers will keep best if stored after they are dry. Thread the peppers on a string to dry. Hang in a cool, dry place.

Pot up chives, parsley and other herbs to extend the growing season in the house.

Pears should be picked at the hard-ripe stage and allowed to finish ripening off the tree. The base color of yellow pears should change from green to yellow as the fruit approaches maturity.

Garden Plants with Silver Foliage

Silver or gray is an interesting color in the landscape. Similar to white, silver has the ability to soothe and blend with other colors.

There are many plants that will sparkle in your garden. As an added benefit, many silver foliage plants prefer full sun with dry soils, making them excellent summer tolerant performers in the garden.

—Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate



Lamb's ear



White sage



Rose campion



Russian sage

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type	Height	Flower	Location
lamb's ear	Stachys byzantina	perennial	12-15 inches	purple	full sun
white sage	Artemisia ludoviciana	perennial	2-4 feet	white	full sun
silver mound	Artemisia schmidtiana	perennial	15-24 inches	yellow	full sun
Russian Sage	Perovskia atriplicifolia	perennial	4 feet	purple	full sun
snow-in-summer	Cerastium tomentosum	perennial	6-8 inches	white	full sun
rose campion	Lychnis coronaria	perennial	30 inches	pink, purple, white	full sun
lavender cotton	Santolina chamaecyparissus	perennial	1-2 feet	yellow	full sun
woolly thyme	Thymus pseudolanuginosus	annual	2-4 inches	pink	full sun
common stock	Matthiola incana 'Annu'	annual	12-30 inches	white, blue, yellow, pink, purple	full sun to light shade
dusty miller	Senecio cineraria	perennial	8-15 inches	yellow	full sun
edelweiss	Leontopodium alpinum	perennial	6-10 inches	yellow	full sun

Holiday Plants, Will They Bloom Again?

Anyone with a green thumb who enjoys working with plants will eventually be tempted to save a plant after the holidays with the intention of trying to get it to re-bloom the following year. This is not difficult, but there are a few guidelines that need to be followed.

Re-blooming Poinsettias

Many poinsettia cultivars will keep their leaves and remain attractive even in summer. Often, the plants are kept as a houseplant through the remainder of the winter and might even be placed outside the following summer. When night temperatures become cool, 55 F to 60 F, bring the plant indoors to a sunny location. Beginning approximately Sept. 25, poinsettias need complete darkness from 5 pm to 8 am daily. Put a cardboard box or bucket over the plant to provide the "short day." Lights from any lamps will prevent normal flowering of an uncovered plant. Continue this "short day"

treatment until the plant bracts show color in late November. Short days and 60 to 65 F night temperatures are essential for good bract development.

Re-blooming Christmas Cactus

This plant is very similar to the poinsettia in that it needs short days and cool temperatures to induce blooming. From mid-September to mid-October, bring the plants inside and begin covering them at night with



Christmas Cactus

a box so that they only receive light for nine hours each day. Night temperatures of 55 F will also result in the development of flower buds. Reduce watering and withhold fertilizer dur-

ing flower bud development. Flower buds will soon begin to form and the plants will be in full bloom in approximately 2 to 3 months.

Re-blooming Amaryllis

These plants are often kept after flowering is done and treated as a houseplant. They will do very well outside during the summer. As danger of frost approaches, bring the pots containing the bulbs inside and place them in a cool room. Water lightly during this period of rest. The bulbs require a two to three month rest period before growth and flowering will begin again. Flower buds should appear several weeks after moving plants to a warm temperature and watering is resumed. Bulbs with four or more healthy leaves throughout the summer, should

be large enough to flower; those with less foliage may not flower. However, with proper care, non-flowering bulbs can be redeveloped for blooming in future years.

J.S. Peterson, USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

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