



# How-To: **WINTER SQUASH HARVEST AND STORAGE**

*Your winter squash may look ready to harvest, but how can you tell if they're ready? Here are some suggestions for how and when to harvest, along with some best practices for winter squash storage.*



BUTTERNUT SQUASH GROWN  
AT BRADDOCK FARMS

**BUTTERCUP,  
KABOCHA,  
BUTTERNUT,  
AND HUBBARD  
SQUASH TASTE  
SWEETER AFTER  
A FEW WEEKS IN  
STORAGE!**

## **WHEN TO HARVEST**

Winter squash can be harvested when they look the color, size, and shape that you're expecting from the variety. If you're planning to store them, though, leave them on the vine until the plants begin to die back, and the skins are very tough.

Some tips for harvesting methods that help increase the storage time for winter squash:

- Check to see if winter squash are ready to harvest by pushing your thumbnail against one. If it leaves a dent, wait longer to harvest.
- Cure the squash in the garden after harvesting them, by leaving them exposed to the sun for 5-7 days. If frost or rain is likely, cover with a tarp.
- If you'd prefer to cure them indoors, keep the squash in a warm, dry, sunny place for several days.
- Harvest winter squash before a heavy frost. If the frost is early and your crop is late, protect the plants and fruits with fabric row cover, a tarp, or straw.
- Winter squash can withstand a couple of light frosts. However, frosted squash run the risk of shortened storage time.
- Cut winter squash from the vine rather than pulling them, to avoid damaging the stem.
- Leave at least two inches of stem attached to the fruit, and handle the squash gently to avoid damaging them. Any nicks or dents can open the fruit to pathogens and cause them to rot more quickly in storage.

## **STORING WINTER SQUASH**

Keep cured squash in a cool, dry, dark place. Temperatures should not go below 50 degrees. For the best flavor, eat smaller squash first and save the larger squash for later use.

Expected storage times for squash:

- ACORN: 2-3 MONTHS
- SPAGHETTI: 3 MONTHS
- DELICATA, BUTTERCUP, AND SWEET DUMPLING: 4 MONTHS
- KABOCHA: 4-6 MONTHS
- BUTTERNUT AND HUBBARD: 6 MONTHS OR MORE