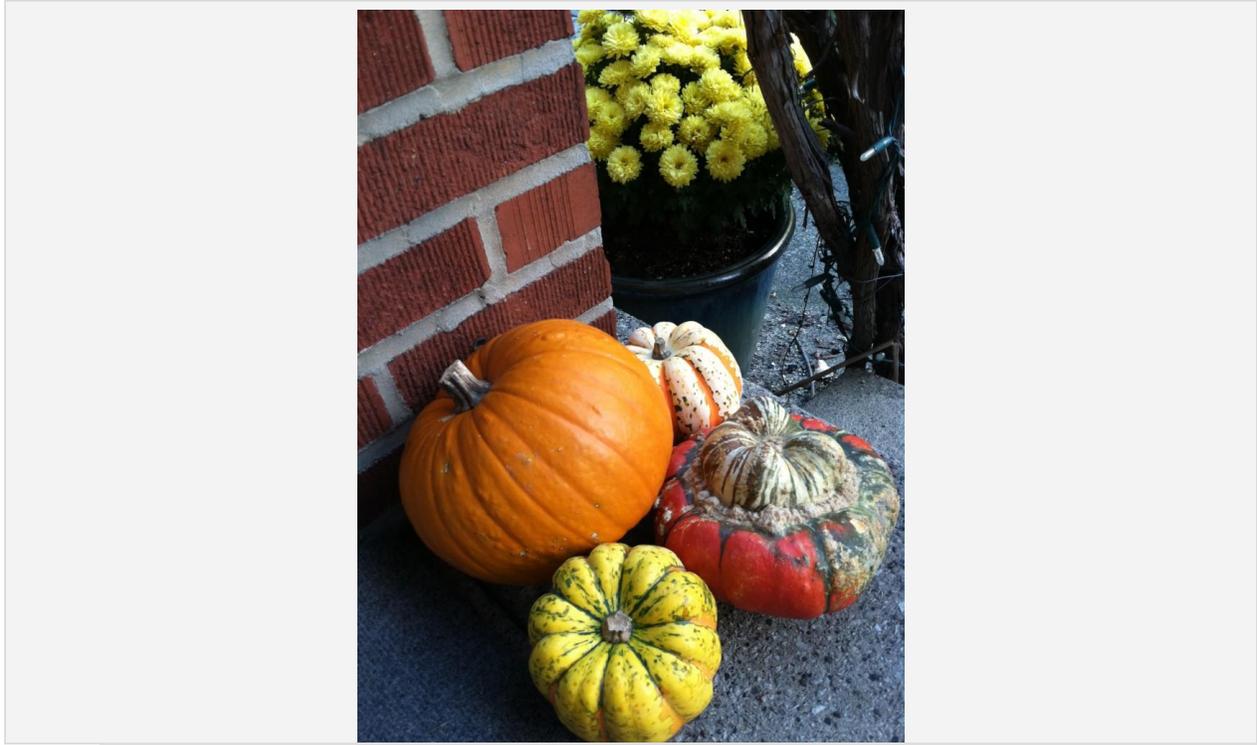




Garden Tips & Techniques: Storage Crops

In the fall, with the winter looming ahead, storage crops become a valuable addition to the cellar or pantry. You may have storage crops still maturing in your garden, or some that are already harvested. Kept in the right conditions, some storage crops can last through a Pittsburgh winter. If you didn't grow any this year, you can of course still pick them up at the farmers market. And if you'd like to plan on growing your own next year, here are specs on planting times and storage conditions for some commonly stored crops.



Winter squash and pie pumpkins store well over the winter.

Beets/Carrots – Most beet varieties store well. For carrots, sow a good storage variety, like Bolero. Plant seeds in July or August and harvest before the ground freezes. Clip off all but 1/2" of foliage. Gently brush off most of the dirt, being careful not to damage the skin. Do not wash. Store in a tightly sealed bag or container in the refrigerator. Beets and carrots can also be stored in the ground; see last week's article: [Overwintering Crops](#).

Cabbage – Choose a storage variety, like Storage #4. Start seedlings in May and plant a storage variety in June or July. Harvest when heads are large and firm. Cabbage can be stored in plastic bags in the refrigerator, and won't last as long as some other storage crops. It prefers 32-40 degrees and high humidity.

Garlic – Plant a stiff-neck variety, like Music, (these store better than soft-neck types) in October or November for harvest the following June or July. Allow fresh garlic to cure - hang in a shady, breezy place or two weeks before clipping

off stem and roots. You can brush off dried dirt but leave as many wrapper papers as possible on each head. Store garlic in a very dry place, in complete darkness, between 35-40 degrees.



Garlic stores best in a cool, dark, dry location.

Onions – Choose a storage variety, like Copra, and plant in the early spring. Onions require high fertility and lots of water to grow well. In late summer, when the tops of the onions yellow and flop over, pull the crop. Allow the onions to dry for at least 2 weeks in a protected, well-ventilated area. Once the onions have dried completely (no more moisture in the stems or necks), store them somewhere well ventilated, like in mesh bags, in the dark, at around 35-45 degrees.

Potatoes – In the late spring, plant varieties of potatoes that are good for storage, like Kennebec. In the late summer, after the plants have died, dig the potatoes. Leave them dirty and dry them somewhere cool and dark for a couple of weeks to cure. Remove any damaged potatoes and store the rest somewhere dark and cold – 40-50 degrees is ideal.

Sweet Potatoes – Plant in late May or early June. Harvest before a hard frost, and do not wash. Cure the sweet potatoes at around 85 degrees for 10 days, or 2-3 weeks at 65-75 degrees. Remove damaged potatoes and gently brush off excess soil. Wrap sweet potatoes individually in newspaper and store in the dark at around 55-60 degrees.

Winter Squash/Pie Pumpkins – Plant seeds at the end of May or early June. Allow the squash fruits to completely mature before harvesting in late summer or early fall. The skin should feel waxy and be very tough. Cut the squash from the plant, leaving at least an inch of stem on the fruit. Cure the squash somewhere warm (can be in the sun) for at least 10 days. Store in a well-ventilated area at around 50 degrees.