

Table 14. Postharvest Handling and Storage Life of Fresh Vegetables

Give careful attention to the postharvest handling and storage of fresh market vegetables. Lack of adequate refrigeration and cooling will result in a shortened shelf-life and lower quality of the fresh vegetable. The following list of recommended storage condition information is modified from the USDA's Agricultural Handbook No. 66, and *Knott's Handbook for Vegetable Growers* (Donald N. Maynard and George J. Hochmuth, 5th ed. 2007).

Vegetable	Storage Conditions		
	Temperature (°F)	Relative Humidity (%)	Relative Storage Life
Broccoli	32	95-100	10-14 days
Cabbage, late	32	98-100	5-6 months
Cauliflower	32	95-98	3-4 weeks
Corn	32	95-98	2-5 days, up to 21 days for supersweet cultivars
Cucumber	50-55	90-95	10-14 days
Muskmelon	36-41	95	10-15 days
Watermelon	50-60	90	2-3 weeks
Pepper, green	45-55	90-95	2-3 weeks
Pepper, ripe	42-45	90-95	1 week
Potato, early	^a	90-95	^a
Potato, late	^b	90-95	^b
Pumpkin	50-55	50-70	2-3 months
Squash, winter	50-55	50-70	^c
Sweet potato	55-60	85-90	5-6 months
Tomato, mature-green	55-62	90-95	1-2 weeks
Tomato, firm-ripe	45-50	90-95	4-7 days

^a Most summer-harvested potatoes are not stored. However, they can be held 4-5 months at 40°F if cured 4-5 days at 60-70°F before storage. They can be stored 2-3 months at 50°F without curing. Potatoes for chips should be held at 70°F or conditioned for best chip quality.

^b Fall-harvested potatoes should be cured at 50-60°F and high relative humidity for 10-14 days. Storage temperatures for seed or table stock should be lowered gradually to 38-40°F. Potatoes intended for processing should be stored at 50-55°F. Those stored at lower temperatures or with a high reducing sugar content should be conditioned at 70°F for 1-4 weeks or until trial cooking tests are satisfactory.

^c Winter-squash varieties differ in storage life. Acorn squash can be stored for 35-55 days, butternut squash for 60-90 days, and Hubbard squash for 180 days.

Be sure the temperature is not too low. Cucumber, eggplant, lettuce, sweet pepper, potato, snap bean, squash, and tomato are among the most susceptible vegetables to chilling or freezing injury. Some of the typical cold injury symptoms that can make vegetables unmarketable include pitting, water-soaked spots, browning, surface decay, and, in pepper and tomato, failure to ripen.

Follow good agricultural practices and sanitation procedures throughout harvest, grading, and packaging operations. More information is available in *Food Safety Begins on the Farm: A Grower's Guide* from Cornell University. Visit the Cornell Good Agricultural Practices Program at www.gaps.cornell.edu.