

Sand Boxes

To prevent shrivelling in vegetables which lose moisture such as swedes, carrots, parsnips, celeriac and beetroot. Store them in layers of moist sand in boxes, in a frost-free dark place such as a shed or cellar.

Clamping

If storage space under cover is limited and you have large quantities of vegetables to store, consider making a clamp. This is a traditional and effective method.

Choose a sheltered, well-drained site. Near a house wall would be suitable.

- Dig a trench around the area to aid drainage.
- Make a 20cm (8in) base layer of light, sandy soil or sand and cover with a layer of straw.
- Remove the top growth from roots to avoid crops rotting.
- Make a pyramid with the roots, using the largest at the bottom.
- Cover the whole pile with a 20cm (8in) layer of straw, followed by a 15cm (6in) layer of soil to keep out the frosts. Leave a tuft of straw emerging from the soil as a chimney for excess heat and moisture to escape.
- Aim to make the clamp around 1m (3¼ft) high and pat the soil smooth with the back of a spade to help water run off.

Leaving in the Soil

If your soil is free-draining leave crops such as parsnips, carrots, beetroot and swedes in the ground over winter and harvest as needed.

Protect the crops with a layer of straw, bracken or soil 6in deep if frost is expected.

Make the layer twice as deep for protecting beetroot if a heavy frost is forecast.

Plaiting

Plaiting onions and garlic.

- Make sure your onions/garlic have dried out well before starting to plait.
- Always keep the plaits dry, with proper air circulation.
- Try and keep the storage room at a consistent temperature. Heavy fluctuations in temperature will encourage softening and sprouting.
- Eat the damaged bulbs first, as they'll keep for a shorter time in storage.
- Cull rotting or bruised ones quickly so it doesn't spread to the others.



Chutneys

Windfall apples, tomatoes and other end-of-season fruit such as plums and rhubarb can be used as there is no worry about the setting qualities. Dried fruit such as raisins, dates and sultanas are commonly used. A big advantage to both fruit and vegetable chutneys is that they improve with age and if properly stored, will remain in good condition for years.

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**Bite
sized**

How to store your Vegetables & Fruits

Methods to store your vegetables & fruits once harvested:

- Freezing
- Drying
- Pickling
- Fermenting
- Clamping
- Plaiting
- Sand Boxes
- Jams/Jellies
- Chutneys/Sauces
- Some vegetables can be left in the ground until needed such as leeks.



Freezing

Before preparing food for freezing you should turn your freezer onto its super or fast setting – preferably 3 hours or so. This drops the temperature as low as possible. When the food goes into the freezer it will cause the temperature to rise as the food cools. The super setting ensures the food already there remains at optimum temperature and the food being frozen cools as quickly as possible. Do not try to freeze too much in one go – never more than 10% of the freezer capacity at a time.

Some vegetables are unsuitable for freezing such as chicory, cucumber, endive, kale, lettuce, radishes, and Jerusalem artichokes.

Drying

Dry vegetables /fruits to enjoy as a snack or add to soups and stews. For drying purposes, vegetables are best picked when slightly immature, whereas fruit should be left to ripen thoroughly. In general, the faster the food is dried the better the result however this shouldn't be at temperatures which are too high resulting in cooking the food. A good non-stick surface (such as silicone baking sheets) to place your food on while drying should prevent it getting stuck on.

Using an oven to dry the foods it should be on a low setting – around 60° C on an electric oven. If using a gas oven, turn the dial to 0 or ¼ - the lowest flame possible. It will probably also be necessary to prop open the oven door to assist the drying process providing some ventilation. With solid-fuel oven, the heat maintained after cooking sessions can be utilized. This may mean that the drying process is not continuous and has to be carried out over several days but this should not affect the quality of the finished product. If dried food is kept in air tight packaging, it will keep indefinitely.

Top Tips for Storage

- Harvest your vegetables/fruits on a dry day, keeping them cool and dark.
- Apples and pears can be kept in a cool, dark place, wrapped individually and loosely (not sealed) in old newspaper. This keeps each from its neighbour, so if any have bruises, the rot does not spread.
- Do not store potatoes near onions or apples as they give off ethylene gas, this gas promotes the sprouting of the potatoes.
- When storing potatoes exclude light, prolonged exposure to light will cause greening of the potatoes.