AUTHORS:

Written by School Grown Student Farmers: Amanda Simpson, Cali Wilson, Deshanel Evans, Jordan Burke, Justin Hutson, Kamaria Mjomba, Katelynn Harker, Liam McNamee, Russell Speares, and Quyen Truong & School Grown Staff: Katie German.

GOOD HARVESTING AND HANDLING MATTERS:

This guide teaches you how to properly harvest crops that we grow at School Grown. We also tell you how to safely wash each item. This is important, as proper harvesting and handling means:

- The produce will last longer in the fridge,
- The produce will not spoil as quickly,
- The produce will look better at the market,
- It will allow the plant you are harvesting from to continue to grow for future harvests.

Everything that we harvest gets weighed, recorded in our harvest log and then labelled. Some crops go in the fridge and some don't. Some get washed and some don't. The chart we made tells you which ones.







USING THIS GUIDE:

Some crops we harvest in the same way so we put them together (lettuce and spinach, for example). Then there are three columns: How to Harvest, How to Wash, and How to Store. Some farms probably use other methods than us, but this is what we do at our school farms.



Crop	How to Harvest	How to Wash	How to Store
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Carrots, Beets	Be careful pulling them out of the soil as they can snap; check the root for size (sometimes it will be coming through the top of the soil); use the turning fork to loosen the soil – be careful not to pierce the root; harvest by hand if the soil is loose; try and keep the tops on for bunching to make them more presentable for market, or if storing in the fridge remove the tops. Careful the red beets can stain your hands or clothes.	Pick off the brown or dead tops; bunch same size roots together – if they are small make a bigger bunch; bunch them with an elastic; use the hose to spray the roots. If you have more than one variety – make some rainbow bunches and some that are just the one colour.	Layer them in the bin in row of four bunches; label the bin; record number of bunches or weight; store in fridge.
Lettuce, Spinach, Mustard Greens, Arugula, Mixed Greens	Use a harvest knife and two bins, work in the morning or a cloudy day (avoid harvesting in the sun), gently hold the plant, cut near the bottom of the plant leaving an inch of plant to grow back, sort through the leaves to remove any dead leaves/bugs/weeds into your compost bin, put good stuff into harvest bin. Be delicate when you work because its easy to bruise.	Fill up a sink with stopper and cold water, soak greens in cold water, sort the leaves into the salad spinner (remove weeds, any brown/ yellow/ bruised leaves), get your spin on – make sure to hold on to it tight and have the drainage hole aimed at the sink, once all the water is off you can take out the greens, put them in a bin to weigh them. Record and label the bin.	Greens can be pre- bagged for markets or stored bulk in the bins. Need to be refrigerated.
Beans, Peas	Pick the bean with the stem still on it (the little hat); use both hands – one hand on the bean and one on the plant; make sure to pick all the big ones; move the leaves around to find the beans that are hiding; try to harvest every 1-2 days. Be careful not to pull the plant out or a branch off.	If they are dirty they can get sprayed with the hose.	Put them in a bin, label, record and store in the fridge.



Crop	How to Harvest	How to Wash	How to Store
Zucchini, Cucumber	Use a harvest knife (or scissors for cucumber), careful that the leaves are prickly so use gloves and have long sleeves, cut into the stem to harvest and not into the fruit, check the flower on the end – if its good leave it on, if its brown or shriveled you can gently slice it off, gently place it in the harvest bin (bruises easily)	Only wash if necessary.	Weigh, label and record, store in the fridge.
Tomatoes	Use a basket and pick cherry tomatoes into the container, leave the hat/stem on, can use a twisting motion, make sure they are ripe, harvest every day to prevent splitting, can wear gloves to avoid staining from the plant.	We don't wash tomatoes.	Weigh, record and label. Cherry tomatoes can go into pint baskets. Tomatoes do not go in the fridge – it makes them mushy. You can put burlap over them to cover.
Strawberries	Harvest the fruit with the little green hat (calyx) still on it, only pick fruit that is red all the way around, remove any moldy/ mushy fruit and put into a compost bin. Harvest directly into the pint baskets.	Do not wash.	Put the pint baskets into the trays and store them in the fridge.
Peppers	Use gloves if harvesting hot peppers, use both hands to make sure you don't remove a branch when pulling the fruit, make sure the fruit is ripe all the way around, use a twisting motion to remove the fruit leaving the small stem intact on the pepper, put the bad ones in the compost (mushy, soft spots, bruised, black spots, mold).	We do not wash them.	Place them gently in the harvest bins, weigh and label the bins, store them in the fridge.



Crop	How to Harvest	How to Wash	How to Store
Mushrooms	Gently break off the mushroom from the log, keeping the mushroom in one piece.	Do not wash.	Store in a brown paper bag in the fridge.
Blueberries, Raspberries	Pick the ripe fruit (blue all the way around or deep red all the way around).	Do not wash.	Store in pint baskets in the fridge.
Nasturtiums	Gently pick the full flower off of the stem. You can also harvest the seed pods.	Do not wash.	Store in the fridge. Can be sold in the lettuce mix.
Mouse Melons/ Cucamelons	Pick them off the plant when they are grape sized. Use two hands to make sure you don't pull off part of the plant when you are pulling on the fruit.	Do not wash.	Store in the fridge.
Dill, Cilantro	Use a harvest knife to cut into the root of the plant down below the surface of the soil. Remove the cotlyedons (the small first leaves on the plant that grow <i>before</i> the true leaves) and any brown and yellow leaves. Bunch together with an elastic.	Dunk in cold water to wash (this is called hydro-cooling). If there is dirt down by the roots, swish it around. Don't bruise the leaves.	Store in a bin in the fridge.
Green Onion	Pull out the plant from the bottom (to keep the greens intact), remove any brown or yellow leaves, bunch together the onions with an elastic, trim the roots with scissors (onion haircut).	Dunk in cold water (hydro-cool), spray off dirt with the hose.	Put them in a harvest bin and store in the fridge.
Potato	Check below the surface of the soil to see if they are ready, use a digging fork to loosen up the soil and pull out the plant. Dig around in the soil for potatoes that came off the plant.	Avoid washing until you're going to sell them, brush off dirt.	Store in a cool dry place.



For more information visit: www.foodshare.net/schoolgrown

Crop	How to Harvest	How to Wash	How to Store
Radishes, Turnips	Check that they are fully grown (see the top coming out of the soil or use your finger to check the size), pull it out from the bottom (to keep greens on), shake off any stubborn dirt into the bed, remove the cotyledons (heart shaped leaves), compost any that are too small, dried out, or cracked. *if the greens are badly eaten, you can just remove them and sell radish roots loose.	Bunch together radishes of the same size, dunk them in cold water to clean. You can use the hose to get dirt off the roots but don't spray the greens with the hose - they will bruise.	Place them in rows in the harvest bin, weigh/ label/ records and store in the fridge.
Basil	Harvest stems off the basil plant (don't get the whole plant), take off the flowers while you're at it, make bunches after removing any dead/yellow leaves.	DO NOT WASH	Store the bunches up right in a bin with some water on the bottom. Do not refrigerate. Basil is kind of picky.
Kale, Swiss Chard, Collard Greens	Gently remove a leaf by twisting it at the bottom of the stem (where it meets the main stem) or cutting it with a harvest knife, watch for any bugs (aphids or flea beetles) that can be removed, never take the leaves from the very top of the plant (growth tip) or the plant won't continue to grow, never take off too many leaves (only harvest a third of a plant); don't leave any of the leaf stem behind as it can rot quickly.	Fill a bin with cold water, soak the leaves fully in the water (hydro-cool), pick out any bad leaves (too many holes, yellow bits, bug eggs, leaf miner or bruised); make bunches of the good leaves (have the good sides facing out, big leaves in the centre and smaller leaves on the outside, mix colours, make sure the bottoms are even); trim the stems to make lengths even.	Place them in the harvest bin in rows of 4-6; put a lid on it, label it, record it and store it in the fridge.



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