

Victoria Weekend Garden Special



And when all the gardening's done... Enjoy Garden-Fresh Vegetables All Year Long

You love to garden, and spend hours outdoors lovingly caring for your fragrant flowers, gorgeous green shrubs and vibrant vegetables. After months of hard work, you reap the rewards - the seeds that you toiled over have become beautiful blossoming flora.

Your garden is abloom with sweet-smelling flowers and a sea of green plants, trees and bushes. You also have plenty of fresh, home-grown vegetables that are ready to be eaten. One problem though - you've planted so many vegetables that you have no idea where to store them. What should you do? Try freezing them so you can enjoy the taste of home-grown vegetables throughout the fall and winter months.

Following are some simple guidelines for freezing a variety of vegetables commonly grown in home gardens, courtesy of GardenGuides - a growing resource for gardeners (www.gardenguides.com).

Asparagus - Wash and remove woody portions and scales of spears. Cut into 6-inch lengths and blanch in boiling water for three minutes. Cool in iced water for three minutes. Drain. Place on trays in a single layer and freeze for 30 minutes. Pack into suitable containers, seal and label. It keeps for up to six months.

Beets - Only freeze young tender beets, no more than 2 inches to 3 inches across. Cook until tender and slice. Cool and transfer to plastic containers. Label. Freeze for up to six months.

Carrots - Wash and scrub carrots, and cut large carrots

into pieces. Blanch for three minutes in boiling water. Chill in iced water for three minutes. Drain. Spread on a tray in a single layer and freeze for 30 minutes. Pack in freezer bags, remove air, label and seal. It keeps for up to six months.

Cucumbers - Peel and chop in a food processor. Pack into plastic containers with tight-fitting lids. Label and freeze. It keeps for up to six months.

Eggplant - Cut into slices, sprinkle with salt and allow to stand for 30 minutes. Drain off excess liquid, and fry gently in butter or margarine until just tender. Cool and pack into plastic containers. Seal and label. It keeps for up to three months.

Ginger - Separate ginger into convenient-sized knobs. Place in freezer bags. Remove excess air from bags, seal and label. Freeze for up to six months.

Peppers - Wash, remove seeds, and cut into slices or leave whole. Place on a tray in a single layer. Freeze for 30 minutes. Pack in freezer bags, remove air, label and seal. Freeze for up to six months.

Squash - Peel and cook in boiling salted water until tender. Mash, cool and pack into freezer containers leaving

room for expansion. Seal and label. Freeze for up to three months.

Sweet potatoes - Peel and cut into pieces. Blanch for three minutes in boiling water, chill in iced water for three minutes. Drain and place on a tray in a single layer. Freeze for 30 minutes. Transfer to freezer bags, remove air, label and seal. It will keep for six months.

Tomatoes - Wash, remove stems, cut into halves or quarters, or leave whole. Dry and pack into freezer bags. Remove air, label and seal. It will keep for six months.

* Dip into boiling water for one minute. Remove and peel. Place on a tray and freeze for 30 minutes. Place in plastic bags, remove air, seal and label. It keeps for up to six

months.

* Simmer chopped tomatoes in a pan for five minutes or until soft. Push through a sieve or food mill to remove skins and seeds. Cool and pack in plastic containers, leaving head space. It keeps for six months.

Turnips - Peel and trim young, tender turnips. Cut to required size and blanch for three minutes. Chill in iced water for three minutes. Drain and place on a tray in a single layer. Freeze for 30 minutes. Transfer to freezer bags, remove air, label and seal. It will keep for six months.

Zucchini - Slice into 1-inch pieces without peeling. Saute gently in a little melted butter until barely tender. Cool, pack into plastic containers leaving head space at the top. Freeze for up to three months.

Once you have experienced the mouthwatering flavour of homegrown tomatoes, it's easy to understand why they are so immensely popular.

Tips on How to Grow Great-Tasting Tomatoes

There is nothing better than a tomato that has been allowed to fully ripen on the plant. In fact, tomatoes are the No. 1 home garden vegetable. Growing a great one, however, takes some skill. Whether you're growing the smallest cherry varieties or a 2-pound-plus giant, with a little know-how, you can harvest rich, delicious tomatoes of every description from early summer to first frost.

For 124 years, breeders at W. Atlee Burpee & Co. have introduced hundreds of tomatoes for different uses and tastes. Here are some tips from Burpee that will help you get a great start on an excellent crop this year.

*** What types to choose** - There's no need to limit the number of tomato types you choose when planning a home garden. There are the early varieties, which are vigorous growers that yield fruit much sooner than others. In terms of size, tomatoes can range from the cherry tomatoes, ideal for salads and snacking, to the giants, with old-fashioned beefsteak flavour. The great-producing varieties can promise heavy yields of large fruits. Saladette tomatoes are great in salads and sauces, while paste tomatoes are best for cooking. Winter-storage varieties last longer off the vine without refrigeration. With planning, you can enjoy homegrown tomatoes all season long.

*** When to sow and transplant** - You can sow tomato seeds directly in your garden after the final frost. However, to get an early start and a season-long harvest, start your seeds indoors six to eight weeks before planting. After they are well rooted, plant them outdoors, spaced 30 inches apart. For lusher plants and healthier fruits, Burpee recommends using a plant food with calcium. Calcium helps maintain the flow of water through the plant into the fruit so that during rapid growth periods, the tomatoes will have adequate fluids and won't rot.

*** How to support** - Burpee recommends supporting your

plants with stakes, cages or trellises. This not only keeps the tomatoes off the ground, it also improves air circulation so you will have larger, cleaner, more perfect fruits.

*** When to harvest** - To get the wonderful flavour that only homegrown tomatoes can produce, leave tomatoes on the plant until they ripen to their fullest. Once you pick a tomato, it stops developing flavour. The longer the tomato is on the plant, the more time it has to develop the natural sugars that make it sweet. Red-fruited varieties are ready when they are a full, deep red. Yellow and orange-fruited tomatoes are ripe when their colour is well developed. Winter-storage tomatoes, like the Red October, can keep three to four weeks longer than other varieties.

To learn more about tomato varieties and care, visit Burpee online at www.burpee.com or call (800) 888-1447.

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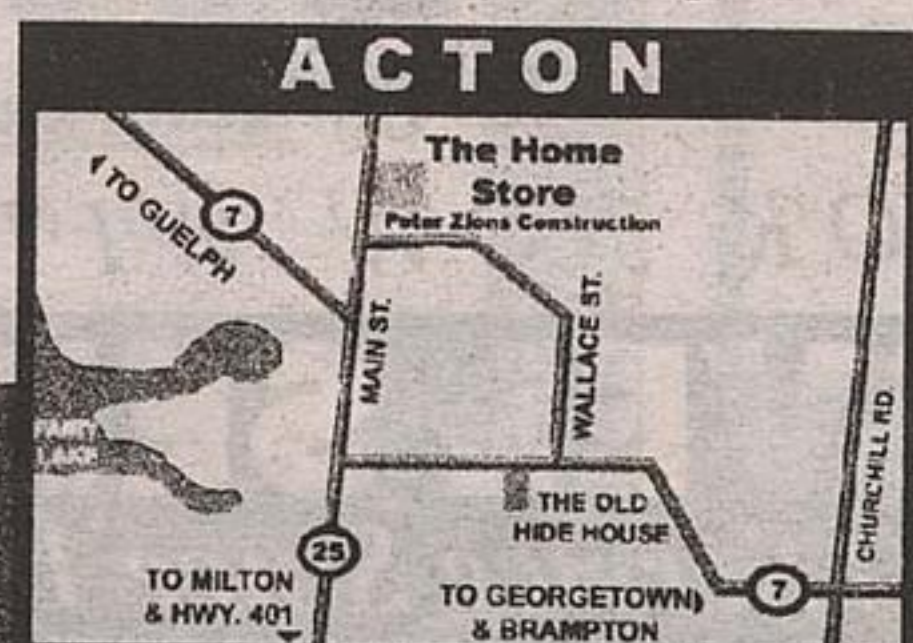
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