

Fresh Connections in Urban Agriculture

Storing and Preserving

Guidelines to storing common produce for short term or preserving them for long term use.

You will notice that as things in your garden ripen and are harvested that you may have a surplus. A surplus is something that is left over after what is needed has been used, an excess. This is common and there a few solutions when it comes to what to do with this surplus.

FREEZING

Freezing works best on just ripe and freshly harvested produce. Wash and dry your vegetables or fruit and place them in an airtight freezer bag to prevent freezer burn. Be sure to label the bag with name and date to help keep track of freezer inventory, as well as when it was processed. Some produce requires blanching before freezing. To do this, simply boil prepared produce (times vary by type of vegetable), remove from heat, and cool quickly with ice water to stop the cooking process. Drain and freeze as above.



DRYING

Many kinds of produce are easily dried to preserve them for future use. Among these are berries, fruit, potatoes, tomatoes, green beans, onions, carrots, and peas. Dry in either a dehydrator or in the oven at the lowest temperature setting for a few hours. Drying times are directly influenced by moisture content and how thin or small you slice them. Thinner, even slices dry better than uneven, thicker slices.



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PICKLING

Pickling is the process of preserving produce with a brine. The best vegetables to pickle are; pickling cucumbers, green beans, and beets. Quick pickling does not require canning, and is great for families that with an abundance of spare vegetables, but not a lot of time. You can simply fill clean mason jars with prepared vegetables, herbs and spices like mustard seeds and fennel, and a pickling brine. Pickling liquid is 2 cups white vinegar and 2 cups of water, 2 tablespoons of salt and 4 tablespoons of sugar heated to boiling. Fill the jars with the hot liquid, leaving 1/2 of space at the top. Put the lid on tightly and leave to cool. These pickles must be stored in the refrigerator, but this makes them readily available for snacking!



CANNING

Canning is a method of preserving food by processing and sealing fresh foods in an airtight container. Hot water canning or a pressure canning are used depending on the type of produce and its acidity. Regardless of the canning process, the beginning methods are the same. Fill clean canning jars with prepared produce and a brine. Place prepared lids and bands on the jars until snug. Process as directed. It is best to consult a canning guide or website before beginning. Always make sure your jars have sealed. Store in pantry!