

Knowing When to Harvest Garlic and Potatoes



I love this time of year! It's truly when the garden looks best. Everything is bright green, there are pops of color here and there, and I'm harvesting things consistently. It feels like the garden is alive. Harvesting kale and other greens is a breeze. I can easily spot when a tomato is ripe for the picking, and I pluck peppers off their stems whenever I feel they're big enough for eating.

Root vegetables like garlic and potatoes, however, are a little more challenging to figure out. While they mature underground, we're left to guess what's going on. It drives me crazy. I'm always tempted to dig a little to see whether my root veggies are ready to dig up, but I know from experience that my excitement often leads to disappointment. Patience is required, and digging in the dirt too soon can harm the

productivity of your plant. So how do you know when it's time to start pulling up those tubers?

When is garlic ready to harvest?

Planted in the fall, garlic requires a long period in the ground before it's ready to pluck from the ground. The first sign that garlic is growing going well and that your plant is nearing fruition is the appearance of garlic scapes. The curly stems shoot out from the center of the plants and signal that the garlic plant is ready to bloom and send out seed from its flower stalk. My garlic scapes have already started to appear, and they'll be cut off soon and enjoyed in salads and stir-fries. The scapes have a delicate garlic taste that's really out of this world.

The scapes appearing doesn't mean it's time to harvest yet, though. Cut the stems to ensure that energy is routed to the garlic bulb. A few weeks later, your garlic will likely be ready. The surefire sign that it's time to dig up bulbs is when the tops yellow and fall over.

When are potatoes ready to harvest?

The same goes for potatoes. Not too long after your plants begin to bloom, you'll notice the tops start to wilt, yellow, and fall over. It's a sign that it may be time to dig up the taters underground. Not sure whether it's okay to go ahead? Gently dig into the earth to check for appropriately sized tubers.

A tip: it's possible to dig up potatoes early. These small tender tubers are called 'new potatoes.' They're not quite mature enough for storage since the skin is typically quite thin and easily pierced, but they're excellent for cooking straight away once harvested.

I hope this helps ease your root vegetable anxiety. I know it can be hard to trust the process going on underground, but

it's well worth a bit of patience.

Happy Canada Day to all my fellow Canadian gardeners!