Harvest Workshop

Agenda:

9:00 – 9:15 - Sign-in, Refreshments

9:15 – 12:00 – Introductions, Discussion and Hands-on Demonstration

* + When to Harvest / How to Harvest
    - * Crop Maturation
      * Spring
      * Fall
  + Storage

Items Needed to Facilitate:

* Healthy, Nutritious Refreshments
* Sign-In Sheet
* Tools
  + Hand Trowels
  + Shovel
* Baskets for harvested crops
* Knife/Scissors for harvesting crops

Budget for Workshop:

$125

What Participants Should Bring:

* Close-toed Shoes
* A Hat
* Water Bottle
* Notebook if Needed

Step-by-Step Instructions:

9:00 – 9:15 - Sign-in and Arrival, Refreshments.

Description: Make sure that you have a sign-in sheet, set up a table to greet people as they arrive to the workshop. Refreshments – provide healthy nutritious food and beverages.

9:15: Introductions:

- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the workshop.

Purpose: This workshop is to educate people on how to harvest the crops that you grow. This includes knowing when the crops are ready, how long the crop takes to mature, and also how to determine which crops to harvest or save for seed.

* + Have everyone introduce themselves and state why they are here and what they want to learn during the workshop.

9-ish – 12:00: Discussion and Hands-on Work:

→ The discussion of each method will come before starting the method. Each step will first be explained, and then the group will work on completing the step (unless otherwise noted).

Different Methods:

When to Harvest:

If you have a seed packet or a catalog, it will tell you how long it takes for that particular seed to mature. If you have a transplant, then you should subtract 1-2 weeks from the total grow time. Even with the days given, you want to pay close attention to your crops to be ready to harvest when they're ripe. Different crops require different times to mature, so look specifically into when to know your crop is ready. Harvesting is intuitive once you learn the basics. If you take time with the plants, they'll “tell” you when they're ready. You're not going to get it right every time, but practice makes perfect.

Before harvesting, be mindful of whether you want to eat it or save its seed. If you're going to save its seed, then first make sure that you leave the strongest and healthiest looking plants. Then, you typically let it fully mature, or “go to seed”.

→ Be sure to look at the Workshop Schedule so that you can attend our Seed Saving Workshop to learn all of the steps.

**Some Specific Examples:**

Squash:

All Squash varieties can be eaten as smaller, less mature fruits. Larger fruits or winter squash varieties can be kept for storage or used to save seed. Some varieties store over winter better than others, so look into your particular squash variety. When they're ready, they will “give” themselves to you when you pull lightly. If you're playing tug of war with it, then you should probably give it a few more days to mature.

Corn:

When to harvest corn depends on the type of corn. If you're growing sweet corn and you want to eat it, you should harvest it when it is in its “milky” stage. You can feel it, as it is growing, you can look at the hairs growing out of the ears of the corn. When they're fresh, green, and moist, feel the ear of the corn and make sure it feels full, if it doesn't, then let it grow a little longer. Make sure you get it before the hairs dry and it becomes starchy. Also, while growing it, if you touch the top of the ear and squeeze it lightly, then you will help prevent pests from eating the tops of the ears. For pretty much all of the rest of corn types, they're flour corns, so you let them go past their milky stage so that you can grind it into flour.

Harvesting in Spring:

If planted early-mid April, in early Spring leafy greens like salad and some root crops like radishes will be ready to harvest. If planted in the Fall, then onions and garlic could potentially be ready in mid to late Spring. There is really no right or wrong way to do things, just practice to find out what works best for you and your crops. With a lot of crops, you want to harvest them before they start to go to seed because that changes its flavor.

**Some Specific Examples:**

Salad/Leafy Greens:

If you harvest it early while it is in its “baby” stage, you should be able to get about three harvests out of it. To harvest the leaves, you can do it one of two ways. You can do it leaf by leaf, cutting about an inch away from the base so as to not kill it and to encourage further growth. Or, you can gently gather the leaves in one hand and cut all of them about an inch away from the base. If harvesting crops like Spinach and Chard, you probably want to use the leaf-by-leaf method.

Radishes:

Radishes, when they're ready, start to push themselves out of the ground. Pull on gently out and check it to make sure that it is mature, visually examine it and taste it to make sure it is ready. Depending on your preference and as long as it's before it goes to seed, then you should be good.

Harvesting in Fall:

Traditionally the harvest is celebrated by many different cultures. Celebrations vary depending on the cultures, but all include a reverence and gratitude for the bounties of the Earth through song, dance and the sharing of food. Sharing the responsibilities of preparing food for storage during winter is also commonly a part of these celebrations.

**Some Specific Examples:**

Chile:

Initially, the peppers grown on a chile plant will be green. To harvest New Mexican green chile (and other peppers), you shouldn't have to rip it or chop it off. When you pull on it lightly, it should just be able to snap off on its own (or with a little twist/pull). If you want red chile, let the peppers mature on the plant and wait until they begin to dry slightly on the plant. Harvest before damage can occur, either through moisture or frost.

Beans:

All beans can be eaten as green beans when they're less mature, or you can wait for them to dry on the plant and store them for later use in soups and other dishes or to save their seed. You will know that the dry beans are ready because the shell of the bean will crack open easily, and the bean inside should be hard and not squishy at all.

Storage:

There are many different methods of storing food once it is harvested. Once again, each crop is going to vary slightly in the techniques used to store over long periods of time. Generally you just want to prevent spoiling, mildew, and rotting through limited the amount of moisture and light that reaches the food. Be sure to check on your food often to ensure you use it before it spoils or somebody/something else gets it. If you want sweet corn, you should just eat it right away. It will store in the fridge for a small amount of time. You can harvest tomatoes when they are still green and leave them (not refrigerated) in a cool, dark place until they begin to turn red and are then ready to eat. Squash should also be left in a cool, dark place until ready to eat.

→ Later in the Fall, attend our Food Preservation Workshop to learn how to save crops for long periods of time.

Reflection Questions:

* + How do you know when a crop is ready to harvest?
  + How do you determine which crops to leave for seed?
  + How do you celebrate the Harvest?