

Horticulture Notes

Harvesting and Post-Harvest Care of Okra

Most varieties of okra are ready to pick 55 to 60 days after planting. Harvest pods when they are 2.5 to 3.5 inches long. Generally, pods should be picked 4 to 6 days after flowering. Pods can be snapped off or cut. Cutting takes longer but produces a nicer product. You should produce 200 to 250 bushel of okra per acre on bare ground (at 30 to 35 pounds per bushels). Based on research, yields on black plastic are generally 1.5 to 2.0 times greater than on bare ground.

Okra deteriorates rapidly and is normally stored only briefly to hold for marketing or processing. Large quantities are canned, frozen, or brined. Okra has a very high respiration rate at warm temperatures and should be promptly cooled to reduce field heat and subsequent deterioration.

Okra which is in good condition can be stored satisfactorily for 7 to 10 days at 45 to 50°F (7 to 10°C). At higher temperatures, toughening, yellowing, and decay are rapid. A relative humidity of 90 to 95% is desirable to prevent shriveling. At temperatures below 45°F (7°C) okra is subject to chilling injury, which is manifested by surface discoloration, pitting, and decay. Holding okra for 3 days at 32°F may cause severe pitting. Contact or top ice will cause water spotting in 2 or 3 days and is not recommended.

Fresh okra bruises easily, the bruises blacken within a few hours. A bleaching type of injury may also develop when okra is held in hampers for more than 24 hours without refrigeration. Storage containers should permit ventilation. Prepackaging in perforated film is helpful to prevent wilting and physical injury during handling.



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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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