Most okra cultivars are ready to pick 55 to 60 days after planting or about 4 to 6 days after flowering. Pods should be harvested when they are 2½ or 3½ inches long. Pods can be snapped off or cut off. Although cutting takes longer, you will produce a cleaner, nicer product. On average, you should produce 200 to 250 30-pound bushels of okra per acre on bare ground. Yields are considerably greater when okra is grown on polyethylene mulch or mulched with compost or other organic materials.

Market price for okra typically declines sharply as the summer progresses. In addition, okra tends to “top out” as the plant ages producing a declining number of pods. At this point in production, cutting back or topping your okra will allow your planting to reestablish itself. Cutting back okra will allow the plant to rejuvenate and produce a crop in the fall. Cut plants back using a mower or pruning shears, leaving 6 to 12 inches of each plant above the ground. Refertilize with 15-0-14, 8-0-24, or 13-0-44 to encourage regrowth and the development of side branches. Fall yields of cutback okra will often exceed that of spring crops or the yields of a crop that is not cut back.

Figure 1. Cut back okra so the plant can reestablish itself.