

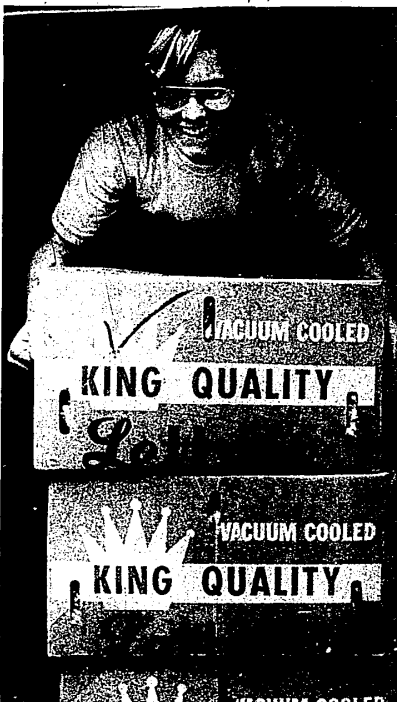
# Perennial pleasures plant, wholesome harvests reap

Farmington Observer

## SPOTLIGHT

Thursday, August 25, 1977

(F1C)



A vegetable market is sometimes as much of a family affair as a backyard garden. At Frank & Faye's Farm Stand on Ann Arbor Trail in Westland, one of many farm markets in the metropolitan area, owner Frank Czajkowski (below) checks out some corn. Grandson Ron Migal (above) unloads a truckload of fresh Michigan lettuce, and Stanley Czajkowski (above, right) looks over some dill with Gertrude Brzozowski. (Photos by Les Raebel)



## Harvest time grows near

Tender sweet corn, juicy watermelon, crispy beans and crunchy cabbage—nothing's better than home-grown vegetables harvested at their peak.

If you're one of the thousands of suburbanites with veggies crowding out the lawn, now's the time to dream about savoring the fruits of your summer's labor. Picking time is just about here.

Just think . . . no more of those supermarket tomatoes that taste like cardboard. No more dried-out corn. No more over-priced cauliflower.

Oh, boy!

NOW, NOW, don't get all carried away. Remember, to do this right, you'll have to make sure it's really the proper time to pick.

The peak of perfection varies from crop to crop. Michigan State University horticulture specialists offer these pointers:

Snap beans are ready for harvest usually two to three weeks after they flower. The pods should show only slight bulges from the developing seeds inside. If left on the vine too long, beans will be tough and seedy.

Beets should be pulled when they are 1½ to two inches across. Older beets get woody and tend to crack.

Broccoli should be picked before the dark green blossom clusters open into yellow flowers.

Brussels sprouts ready for harvest are firm, compact and bright green.

Cabbage heads should be firm and feel heavy for their size. If left on the plant too long, they will split open.

Carrots get tough as they get older and bigger, so harvest when they are at most one to 1½ inches in diameter.

Cauliflower heads are ready for harvest when they reach a diameter of about six inches. Yellowing is a sign the heads are too mature or were not blanched properly. (To blanch, or whiten, the heads, cover them with some of the larger leaves when heads are two to three inches across. They should be ready for harvest within four to 12 days, depending on the weather.)

Sweet corn is tastiest if picked when the silks are dry and dark and the kernels are plump and milky. Kernels should pop open readily when squeezed.

Cucumbers that are soft and yellow are past their prime. Harvest while they are still dark green and firm. Letting cucumbers mature on the vines will reduce or halt production.

Leaf lettuce should be harvested as soon as the leaves are big enough to eat. Pick as soon as the head is a reasonable size. Lettuce left in the garden too long will quickly go to seed.

Onions for fresh eating can be harvested almost any time. Onions for storage should be left in the ground until the tops have fallen over and turned brown.

Radishes can be harvested as soon as they are big enough to eat. If left too long, they get woody and hollow.

Peppers are ready for harvest when they are firm and thick-walled. Red peppers should be uniformly red before they're picked.

Potatoes for fresh eating can be dug

as soon as they are big enough to use. Potatoes for storage should be left in the garden until the plant tops die down.

Pumpkins should mature on the vines. They are ready for harvest when they have a good orange color all over and the skin is hard, not easily punctured by a thumbnail. Cut them off the vines, leaving a small portion of stem attached.

Summer squash should be picked when small—six to eight inches long—and thin skinned. As they get older and larger, they become tough and the seeds get woody.

Winter squash should be harvested after the beginning of cool weather. Cool temperatures increase sugar con-

tent and storage life. Winter squash should be tough skinned—not easily punctured by a thumbnail—and of good color.

Tomatoes, when ripe, are a uniform red or yellow, and firm. Mushy tomatoes are past their prime.

Turnips of two to three inches in diameter are the best eating. Larger ones tend to be coarse-textured and bitter.

Watermelons are ready for harvest when they can be pulled off the vine with little effort.

Watermelons turn a creamy yellow on the bottom when they're ripe. The top surface also becomes dull rather than glossy.

*Then a sentimental passion of a vegetable fashion must excite your languid spleen,  
An attachment to a Plato for a bashful young potato, or a not too French French bean!  
Though the Philistines may jostle, you will rank as an apostle in the high aesthetic band,  
If you walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in your medical hand.  
And everyone will say,  
As you walk your flowery way,  
"If he's content with a vegetable love which would certainly not suit me,  
Why, what a most particularly pure young man this pure young man must be!"*  
—W.S. Gilbert



Slim ears of corn with small kernels are the most tender, says Colleen Brooks, a saleswoman at Bob Cagle's Market in Livonia. (Photo by Bob Woodring)