

Growing Tips: Harvesting and storing fruit

Apples are ready for picking when the stalks detach from the tree easily without pulling and tugging. Cup the apple in your hand and lift and twist – if it is ready it should come away easily. Try not to press or handle the fruit too much or it will bruise. Pears need to be treated very gently. Hold the ball of the fruit in the palm of your hand, place a finger against the top of the stalk and lift the fruit upwards. If it doesn't come away, it isn't ready.

Apples and pears can be stored for several weeks or months (depending on variety). Choose clean, unblemished fruits for storing as they will quickly rot if bruised or damaged. Inspect and handle the fruits carefully. Wrap each fruit individually in a sheet of newspaper before placing them in a seed tray, shallow box or basket and leave in a cool, frost-free place (a garden shed or garage is ideal). Alternatively, place about six fruits in a clear polythene bag, perforating the bag with a few holes for ventilation. Lightly twist and bend the top of the bag over, and tuck it under the bag before placing the bag in store. Check the stored fruits regularly and remove any which show signs of rotting. Cooking apples may be peeled, cored, chopped and frozen in bags for later use.

If you have more fruit than you can store, try juicing the fruit using an apple press (it is often possible to borrow one from your local apple group). The juice can be drunk fresh (within three days of pressing – keep it in the fridge to keep it fresh), or pour

into old plastic drinks bottles and freeze (remember to leave enough space at the top of the container for the juice to expand during freezing). A small amount of vitamin C (ascorbic acid) added to the juice after pressing will help prevent it discolouring.



Apple pressing the traditional way



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