



# Top Tips

## Harvesting Edible

### Crops

#### **'Cut and Come Again' Crops**

There are a wide range of leafy vegetables from which you can harvest some leaves from as soon as they are established, about 12cm/5 inches high. If you just take a few leaves at a time they will continue to grow and produce leaves for many months. These types of crops include Rocket, Spinach, Kale, Lettuce (but not wholehead varieties), Pak choi and Chard.

#### **Root crops**

Carrots, beetroot, Kohlrabi and turnips do not become ripe at a particular time. Therefore, you can harvest them as early as you want, often 'baby' root crops which are only 4-6cm/1.5 – 2.5 inches in diameter or length are sweet and can be cooked more quickly than larger specimens. Watch out for beetroot 'bolting' (sending out long stalks and starting to flower) the root will become woody and unpleasant to eat. So, if this happens to your crops harvest them immediately and cook the small beetroot while it is still juicy. Make sure that you harvest your radishes when they are still small (2-3cm in diameter) as large radishes will quickly become woody and unpleasant to eat.

#### **Potatoes**

When you harvest potatoes you are not waiting for them to become ripe, you are waiting for them to become the right size. So harvesting is mostly a question of timing. If you planted your potatoes in March, they should usually produce a good crop by the end of June, but if you leave them in the ground they will become larger. You should wait until after the potato plants have flowered and then harvest them. If in doubt lift one of the plants and see how many potatoes it has produced before lifting all the row. If you leave potatoes in the ground too long they may be eaten or infected by pests and/or diseases, so don't wait too long.

#### **Peas and Beans**

Mangetout pea pods should be harvested when they are small (4-5cm/1.5 inches) as this will encourage the plants to flower again and produce more pods. For French beans (where you eat the pod) you should wait until the pods is the correct length for the variety – usually about 10cm/4 inches. For all other pea and bean varieties wait until the pod is plump and full and then taste the peas/beans to see if they are sweet.

#### **Tomatoes**

Taste them – if they are sweet then they are ready to harvest.