

PICKING AND STORING

Picking

Apples

Each apple variety has its optimum picking time and eating period, which are usually different (see Table for examples). Later varieties *need* a period of maturation to develop their full flavour.

Description	Variety	Picking time	Period of use
Early eater	Beauty of Bath	Early august	Early august
Early cooker	Grenadier	Mid-August	Aug - October
Mid-season eater	Lord Lambourne	Late September	L. Sept - mid Nov.
mid-season cooker	Lord Derby	Late September	Oct - December
Late eater	Ashmead's Kernel	Mid October	December - February

Apples should be picked when they part from the stalks easily. Lift the apple in the palm of your hand to a horizontal position and give it a gentle twist. If it comes off easily it is ready. Late maturing varieties should be picked in late October, before the first frosts and not left on the tree.

Apples often take on a brighter colour when ready for picking and the pips turn from white to brown. If you shake them they often rattle. If you see the fruit dropping this is also a sign that they are ripe.

Go over the tree and pick off all those that are ready once a week. Don't pick them all at once.

Pears

Pears need to be picked a little before they are ripe otherwise they become floury and tasteless. When the first fruit parts easily from the stalk, pick them all and ripen in storage.

The degree of ripeness depends on personal preference and experience but once the fruit 'gives' a little, when squeezed gently between the finger and thumb near the stalk, they are usually ready to eat. If the fruit is to be used for cooking, this is less critical.

As with apples, early varieties such as Jargonelle must be eaten immediately. Later ones need a period of storage to soften and develop their flavour. (See Table for examples)

Description	Variety	Picking time	Period of use
Early eater	Jargonelle	Early August	August
mid-season eater	Louise bonne of Jersey	Late September	October
Late eater	Winter Nelis	Late October	Nov - Jan

Plums and cherries.

Different varieties of plums, gages, damsons and cherries ripen at different times and require no ripening period. (See table for examples).

Description	Variety	Period of use
Early eating plum	Opal	Late July
mid-season plum	Victoria	Late August
Late plum	Marjories Seedling	Late September
Early cherry	Merton Glory	Late June
mid-season cherry	Stella	Late July
Late cherry	Morello	August

With Plums, gages and damsons, the stalk is left on the tree. With cherries, it is taken with the fruit.

Storing

Early apples like Beauty of Bath and pears such as Jargonelle and Beth do not keep and should be eaten immediately. Others must be stored until ready. They require a relatively high humidity to prevent shrivelling and some ventilation to allow respiration to continue and are best stored in a cool, dark, frost-free place such as a garden shed or out-building.

Traditional method.

Put the fruit in a single layer in the bottom of a wooden ‘orange’ box or flat light-blue plastic ‘mushroom’ box, label them and stack. Wrapping each individual fruit in kitchen paper will help reduce moisture loss but it is not essential for most varieties.

Modern method.

Put about 500g of fruit into polythene bag, fold over the opening and punch a hole in the side of the bag with a pencil. Store in boxes or, if you use tie-handled bags, these can be hung from the roof in a cool place. Any rotten fruit can easily be seen and removed. Fruits that shrivel badly in storage such as the apple Orlean’s Reinette and the pear Catillac are best stored in this way.