**Segment for Week of 16 August 2021**

**Winter Squash**

This is Julie Callahan bringing you information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Today we will discuss harvesting your winter squash and what you should do to cure them.   
  
You should harvest winter squash when the fruit are fully mature. Mature winter squash have very hard skins that can’t be punctured with the thumbnail. Additionally, mature winter squash have dull-looking surfaces.  
  
When harvesting winter squash, handle them carefully to avoid cuts and bruises. These injuries are not only unsightly, they provide entrances for various rot-producing organisms. Cut the fruit off the vine with a pruning shears. Leave a 1 inch stem on each fruit.  
  
After harvesting, cure winter squash (except for the acorn types) at a temperature of 80 to 85°F and a relative humidity of 80 to 85 percent. Curing helps to harden the squash skins and heal any cuts and scratches. Do not cure acorn squash. The high temperature and relative humidity during the curing process actually reduce the quality and storage life of acorn squash.  
  
After curing, store winter squash in a cool, dry, well-ventilated location. Storage temperatures should be 50 to 55°F. Do not store squash near apples, pears, or other ripening fruit. Ripening fruit release ethylene gas which shortens the storage life of squash.  
  
When properly cured and stored, the storage lives of acorn, butternut, and hubbard squash are approximately 5 to 8 weeks, 2 to 3 months, and 5 to 6 months, respectively.

For more information on winter squash, call your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office. Here on the Shore call either 678-7946 or 787-1361

Source: [https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/.../what-proper...](https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/faq/what-proper-way-harvest-and-store-winter-squash?fbclid=IwAR0g6j4h-0kXEsZw7XQL_uAJL_B7X05w3DcOg2EZ5Ig_32JtmwFTYcVdKLs)