

## **Harvesting and Storing Pears**

Knowing when to harvest pears is confusing to many gardeners. Pears do not ripen with good quality if left on the tree. They often develop stone or grit cells, or a mealy texture that makes the fruit less desirable. Tree ripened fruits may also have soft, brown centers, and a reduced shelf life. For good flavor and texture, pears must be ripened after harvest.

Harvest pears while they are still quite firm (hard) but the skin color, or “ground color”, has lightened to a pale green or greenish-yellow color. Ground color is the color of a pear's skin, disregarding any areas that have become red. Don't allow pears to become fully yellow on the tree before harvesting. Additional indications that pears are ready to harvest are when the fruit stem easily separates from the branch with an upward twist of the fruit and when the lenticels (spots on fruit surface), which are white or green on immature fruits, become brown.

After harvest, pears should be held at 60 to 65°F for 1 to 3 weeks, depending on the type of pear. During this time the pears will ripen and soften. High temperatures (75°F and higher) after picking will cause the fruit to break down without ripening. After ripening, pears should be canned or preserved.

To keep pears longer in storage, do not allow them to ripen after harvest. Sort the immature pears for defects, discarding any with bruises, mechanical damage or insect damage, then place them into cold storage at 29°-31°F and 90% humidity. Perforated plastic bags can be used to store small groups of fruit, and maintain high humidity. Regularly inspect stored fruits for mold, and fruit breakdown. Pears in a good storage environment should last 2-4 months.

Ripen small amounts as needed, by moving them to a warmer location, 60-65°F.