The winter squashes – acorn, butternut, pumpkins, etc – are starting to ripen. These are great sources of nutrition that last into the winter and possibly spring. They often store very well in a cool dry location for several months. Acorn, delicata and spaghetti squash should be eaten first, since they do not store as long as butternut and buttercup squash. So how do you know when to harvest these squashes? There are two characteristic signs that indicate that winter squash is ready to harvest:

• The stem starts to shrivel up and dry;
• The skin is so hard that you can’t cut it with your thumbnail. (Pumpkins are an exception as their skin tends to stay a bit soft even when ripe – the orange color is a good indicator, however.)

Cut squashes from vine with a sharp knife leaving 1-2 inches of stem. Store acorn, delicata and spaghetti squashes right away. Cure all other varieties in the sun for about 10 days to harden the skin for better storage. If there is a chance of frost, cover them or move them inside, then put them back outside to finish curing. Store when cured and eat at will!
KALE — THE MISUNDERSTOOD

Just what is kale and why is it worth growing in the garden? Well, for one thing, kale is a powerhouse: it has slightly less iron than spinach, but 3 times more vitamin C, more vitamins A and B and more calcium, potassium and protein. Maybe Popeye should have eaten kale instead of spinach! It is also very easy to grow, produces continuously all season and can continue to produce into the fall and winter. In fact, frost actually improves the taste of this fine vegetable. It also can be stored in the refrigerator in a plastic storage bag from 2 weeks to a month or chopped up and stored in the freezer. Pretty good!

To harvest kale, simply use a sharp knife to cut the leaves from the plant near the stalk. Usually it’s best to take them from the bottom to keep the plant producing more at the top.

Since kale has a thicker leaf than spinach (more like cabbage and collards), it needs to cook longer to make it tender. It’s often best to remove the thick rib running down the center of the leaf since this is pretty tough. Kale cooks down a lot so what might look like tons is likely to shrink to a small amount. It is delicious stir-fried with a little olive oil and garlic, covering it with a lid for a while to “steam” it a bit. Kale is also great when added to soups and stews.