

Underground Sleepers

These foods will keep for two months or more under cold, moist conditions — no processing required. A root cellar is ideal, or you can bury boxes or barrels underground. (Search for “root cellar” at www.MotherEarthNews.com for more.) If you live in a cold climate but don’t want to dig, you can store

many of these crops in an unheated garage or outbuilding. In warm climates where the soil stays above 45 degrees in winter, a second refrigerator may be your best option. Running an extra fridge consumes energy, but not nearly as much as is needed to process, package and ship the crops you would buy otherwise.

Crop	Peak Season	Handling and Storage Tips
Apples	Late summer to fall	Late maturing tart apples store best. Ideal temperature range is 30 to 40 degrees with high humidity. Separate apples from root vegetables because they give off ethylene gas that causes veggies to spoil. <i>(May also be dried or canned.)</i>
Beets	Summer to fall	With tops removed, unwashed beets will keep 3 months or more at 32 to 40 degrees with high humidity. <i>(May also be canned.)</i>
Brussels sprouts	Fall	Pull up plants, shake soil from roots, and hang upside down in a cool basement. They will keep 3 to 6 weeks at 40 degrees with high humidity. <i>(May also be frozen.)</i>
Cabbage	Late summer to fall	Plants dug, trimmed and replanted in large pots will keep up to 7 months at 32 to 40 degrees with high humidity. Trimmed heads will keep 3 months. <i>(May also be canned.)</i>
Carrots, parsnips	Late summer to fall	Topped roots with leaves snipped off just above the growing crown will keep 3 months or more at 32 to 40 degrees with high humidity. Roots replanted in spring will produce seeds. <i>(May also be frozen.)</i>
Onions	Late summer to fall	Cured pungent onions will keep 6 months or more at 32 to 40 degrees with moderate humidity. Sweet onions store 1 to 2 months.
Pears	Fall	Wipe clean, pack in loose paper, and store at 29 to 34 degrees with high humidity. Most varieties store less than 3 months. <i>(May also be frozen, canned or dried.)</i>
Potatoes	Summer to fall	Store best at 40 to 45 degrees with high humidity. Varieties will begin sprouting in 3 to 8 months.
Rutabagas	Fall	Will keep 2 to 4 months at 32 to 40 degrees with high humidity.
Sunchokes	Fall, winter, spring	Will store 2 to 5 months at 32 to 40 degrees with high humidity. Can be left in the ground in Zones 6 to 8.
Turnips	Fall	Stretch the fall season with protective covers. Topped roots store 4 months or more at 32 to 40 degrees with high humidity.