

Larry Crouse

Extension Horticulture Agent

Storing Apples

You can enjoy apples from January to June – with the right conditions. Some apple cultivars can be stored for longer periods than others. Some cultivars will stay in firm, crisp condition for about 6 to 8 months with good storage conditions. The approximate length of time cultivars will keep well under refrigerated conditions are as follows:

Wealthy: 60 days	Golden Delicious: 150 days	Rome Beauty: 220 days
Paulared: 90 days	Empire: 150 days	Winesap: 220 days
Gala: 120 days	Delicious: 160 days	Fuji: 240 days
Jonathan: 120 days	Braeburn: 180 days	Granny Smith: 240 days
Grimes Golden: 120 days	Idared: 200 days	Arkansas Black: 240 days

The condition of the apples and how they are stored will strongly influence the storage period. Some guidelines to help assure good quality and maximum storage life of apples include:

- ✓ Store only the best quality.
- ✓ Pick as they are first maturing.
- ✓ Avoid skin breaks, disease or insect damage, and bruises on individual fruit
- ✓ Store in a plastic bag to help retain moisture in the apples. The bag should have a few small holes for air exchange. The bags of apples may be stored in boxes to prevent bruising if they must be stacked or moved from time to time.
- ✓ Refrigerate at about 35 degrees F. An extra refrigerator works well.
- ✓ Sort about every 30 to 40 days to remove fruit that may be beginning to rot.

Little Barley in Lawns

We mentioned this weed earlier in the year but it was too early to control it. Many people mistake little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) for a little foxtail because the foxtail and little barley seedheads are similar. However, little barley is a winter annual that comes up in September - October and spends the winter as a small plant. It thrives in the cooler spring temperatures, forms seed heads and dies out usually by July. Foxtail, on the other hand, is a summer annual that does well in hot weather. Also, foxtail will not produce seedheads until mid- to late-summer.

Now is the time to control it for next year. The best control for little barley is a thick lawn that is mowed high enough that sunlight does not hit the soil. Little barley seed will not germinate in such conditions. Overseeding now can thicken up a tall fescue lawn and prevent a little barley infestation. However, if you do not plan to overseed, preemergence herbicides can be used to provide at least partial control of this weed.

The only preemergence herbicide that I know is labeled specifically for little barley is Surflan. It is also sold under the name of Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden. Surflan can only be used on warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass) and tall fescue grown in warm-season areas such as Kansas. However, Dimension (dithiopyr), is labeled for barley (*Herodium* spp.) which would include little barley and therefore can be used to keep this weed under control. Because little barley is a winter annual, apply the preemergence herbicide now September and water in to activate. If overseeding, do not apply any preemergence herbicide as it will interfere with the germination of tall fescue.

Blister Beetles

These beetles are notorious for quickly stripping vegetables (especially tomatoes) and ornamentals of their foliage. There are several species of blister beetles which vary in size (often between 0.5-0.75 inch long) and color (such as black, gray or brown-striped), but most are recognized by their elongated, narrow, cylindrical, soft bodies with middle body part (thorax) narrower than the head or wingcovers. Some home gardeners like to use hand picking as a nonchemical method for controlling these large insects. However, wear gloves and use caution because these beetles contain a substance called cantharidin.

This chemical is an irritant capable of blistering internal and external body tissues exposed to the chemical. On tender human skin, body fluids of adult blister beetles may cause large, erect, watery blisters. Chemical control of blister beetles is also possible. Cyfluthrin (Bayer Vegetable and Garden Insect Spray) and gamma- or lambda-cyhalothrin (Spectracide Triazicide, Bonide Beetle Killer, Bonide Caterpillar Killer) can be used for control. Cyfluthrin has a 0 day waiting period and lambda-cyhalothrin has a 5-day waiting period on tomatoes.

Harvesting and Roasting Sunflower Seeds

Sunflowers are usually ready to be harvested beginning in mid-September and into October. Seed heads can ripen on the plant, but they will need protection from birds. Try covering the heads with a paper sack or cheesecloth once the petals start turning brown. Use a twist tie or rubber band to secure the covering. This will not only help keep birds out but will prevent ripened seeds from dropping out of the head. Check for maturity by looking for the following signs:

- Florets in the brown center of the flower disk should be shriveled.
- Heads should have turned down.
- The backside of the head should be lemon yellow.

The ultimate check, of course, is to pull a few seeds to see if they have turned black with white stripes, the typical color. Empty shells usually indicate a lack of pollination earlier in the year. If heads are to remain uncovered, harvest when a few seeds start turning black and white. The flavor will not be good as when seeds are allowed to ripen on the plants, but fewer seeds will be lost.

Cut the heads and place in a paper sack. Some people prefer to cut the heads with about a foot of stem attached and hang them upside down in a dry, well-ventilated area. A paper bag or cheesecloth can be placed over the heads to prevent seeds from dropping as they dry. Seeds can be easily removed from dry heads by rubbing gently.

Roasting Seeds

Raw, mature seeds may be prepared at home by covering unshelled seeds with salted water (2 quarts of water to 1/4 to 2 cup salt). Bring to a boil and simmer 2 hours, or soak in the salt solution overnight. Drain and dry on absorbent paper. Put sunflower seeds in a shallow pan in a 300-degree F oven for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Take seeds out of the oven and add 1 teaspoon of melted butter or margarine, or cooking oil per 1 cup of seeds if they are to be eaten immediately. Stir to coat. Put on an absorbent towel. Salt to taste.