



COLD STORAGE FOR YOUR HARVEST DAY

A Garden Team Planning Guide

Using School Refrigeration:

- Check what refrigeration options are present at the school - outside of the cafeteria, there may be refrigerators in other areas of the school like the teacher's lounge, nurse/health office, for afterschool programs, or coolers for sports teams - ask around to see if there are any on site solutions that could work to store produce.
- If sharing cold storage with the school's foodservice team, confirm district/school policy on use of cafeteria refrigeration for food not being used in food service.

When sharing refrigeration in the school:

- Make sure you have a designated space to store produce (it's sometimes helpful to put a sign on the shelf, fridge door, etc) to make sure the produce isn't mistakenly used for food prep or a staff member's lunch.
- Confirm access to the fridge - is the door locked, or restricted at certain times of the day?
- Prior to your harvest day, send a friendly reminder to ensure that a clean space is available to store the harvest.

Finding Refrigeration for Your Garden from Outside Sources:

- Reach out to a local Home Depot, Lowe's, etc. - often these organizations are willing to donate product to support school garden initiatives, and a mini fridge can be purchased or donated for around \$100.

Feel free to share Big Green's [donation request letter template](#)

- Craigslist & other community marketplaces can be a good resource for schools to purchase a gently used refrigerator at a lower cost.

PRODUCE STORAGE TIPS

- Harvest only what you have specifically planned to eat or share. Fresh produce often will not last long once harvested so the best way to eat your fresh produce is to plan ahead of time for how you will eat the produce, and then harvest it soon before eating.
- Smaller, more frequent harvests may be a better solution than a single large harvest day for schools tight on refrigeration space.
- Save fridge space by keeping items that don't need refrigeration (ie, tomatoes, potatoes, or onions) stored in a separate location.
- In cooler weather, or for produce that doesn't wilt, schedule a harvest for later in the school day - if students are harvesting right before they go home, they can refrigerate it at home.
- Some produce, like leafy greens, delicate herbs, and root veggies will hold up better if harvested in the morning rather than in the heat of the afternoon - work with your school's garden team to strategically plan harvests to ensure the highest quality of produce.