

# Organic Texas Produce

“Going green” for you may mean recycling your newspapers, carpooling to work with a friend, or even composting your leftovers. Or it could mean filling your grocery basket—and your hungry family—with organic foods. Environmentally conscious shoppers can find a wide selection of organic products, including a variety of Texas-grown organic produce, throughout their local H-E-B store. *By Liz Carmack*

“People are more health conscious and earth conscious,” says Cory Oliver, H-E-B’s produce business development manager. “We want to give our customers a choice.”

But some of you may not know the difference between organic and non-organic crops. Brad Stufflebeam, president of the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, says many people think organic growers don’t use any fertilizers and pesticides. Not true. Organic farmers just use natural ones. “It’s ‘Old World’ farming with new techniques,” he explains.

Farmers who have a “Certified Organic” seal on their produce follow specific U.S. Department of Agriculture rules. They can’t use synthetic chemicals, and they care for their land and crops in ways that conserve natural resources such as soil and water.

In other words, if organic farmers find insects chowing down on lettuce leaves or boring into fruit and nuts, they’ll release “good bugs” to dine on the pesky pests instead of using a synthetic pesticide. What about weeds? You guessed it. Organic farmers weed by hand instead of spraying a synthetic herbicide. Even before the first seed is planted, farmers start with a nutrient-rich soil fertilized with composted animal manure—the key to growing healthy organic food. “We’re not trying to manipulate nature as much as work with it,” Stufflebeam explains.

If organic produce is a staple of your family’s diet, shop at your neighborhood

store for fresh-picked Texas spinach in October and November and a cornucopia of local fruits and vegetables—including cucumbers, yellow squash, bell peppers, and cantaloupe—from March through August, Texas’s primary growing season. Do you love the taste of a homegrown tomato, fresh off the vine? You can enjoy Texas-grown organic tomatoes from H-E-B, a special summertime treat you can indulge in even if you don’t have a green thumb.

H-E-B works with local organic farmers, Oliver says, so shoppers who want to follow the motto, “know your farmer, know your food” can do so at their neighborhood store. “If produce is picked fresher and not transported over so many miles, you’re getting more for your money,” Stufflebeam adds. “That’s why it’s important to have food distributors like H-E-B committed to Texas farmers.

“A small farmer like me can pick my crop and have it delivered to H-E-B’s back door within 12 to 24 hours,” Stufflebeam explains. “It takes an exceptional company to make it easy for local farmers to do business with them. My local H-E-B is in Brenham. I can drive eight miles and sell my crop straight to my local store.”

Whether you’ve been organic-savvy for years or are just learning to appreciate what the Certified Organic label means, you can enjoy local organic produce picked at peak ripeness and join H-E-B in supporting Texas farmers.

Texas-grown organic tomatoes are a summertime treat.



Ladybugs are a natural pesticide and a “good bug”—they dine on pesky pests that can destroy tomato and pecan crops.



Texas’s primary growing season from March through August offers an abundance of local fruits and vegetables, including cantaloupe.

