

Decorative Gourds

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Planting

- Make sure your gourds are placed in an area where they will get 6-8 hours of sunlight a day.
- Mound soil into hills about 4 inches high.
- Hills should be spaced 4-6 feet apart depending on the growth habit of the gourds.
- Plant seeds at a depth of 1/2 to 1 inches deep.
- Thin to 1-3 plants per hill once seeds have germinated.
- Consult the back of the seed packet for more information specific to your gourd variety.



Care and Harvest

- Water consistently, especially once fruit begin forming. About 1 inch per week (including rain) will be enough.
- Weed carefully, gourds have shallow roots.
- Compost or a balanced fertilizer (e.g. 10-10-10) can be added to the soil around the plant when flowers start to bloom.
- Gourds are ready to harvest 75-180 days after planting and should have developed their full color and become hard.
- To harvest, cut gourds from the vine 1 to 2 inches above the fruit.
- Discard any bruised or damaged gourds.

Cleaning the Gourds

- Use a mild soapy water solution and gentle scrubbing to clean of dirt and garden debris.
- To kill all fungus and mold use one of the following solutions:
 - One part bleach to ten parts water.
 - A weak solution of water and household disinfectant.
- Carefully dry the gourds with a soft cloth or towel.

Curing the Gourds

- Place gourds in a dry location with plenty of air circulation.
- Be sure that gourds don't touch. They can, however be placed on newspaper.
- Inspect and turn gourds frequently. Surface molds can be removed with a second washing of diluted bleach. Discarding any gourds that shrivel, have soft spots, or other signs of rot.
- Surface drying takes about 1 week. During this time the surface color will brighten.
- The gourd is completely dry when it is light weight, hard to the touch, and you can hear seeds rattling inside. This can take 1 to 6 months depending on the size of the gourd.

Your gourds can now be polished, waxed, shellacked, carved or painted. You will be able to enjoy them for years to come.

References

For more information you can consult our sources:

- "Harvesting & Curing Gourds," Clemson University Cooperative Extension available at www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/hot_topics/2008/09gourds.html
- "Preserving Ornamental Gourds," University of Illinois Extension available at web.extension.illinois.edu/state/newsdetail.cfm?NewsID=7924
- "Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky," ID-128 Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

