

GOURDS! THEY HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR A LONG, LONG TIME. SOME FEEL THAT THIS PLANT MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE FIRST CULTIVATED PLANTS GROWN BY MAN FOR ITS USEFULNESS AS A CONTAINER OR DIPPER. THEY ARE USEFUL YET TODAY BUT FOR VARIED AND DIFFERENT USES. CRAFTERS AND ARTISTS HAVE FOUND THE GOURD TO BE A VERY RECEPTIVE ART FORM IN MODERN SOCIETY. YOU WILL BE ABLE TO USE YOUR OWN GOURDS IN MANY CREATIVE WAYS. BUT FIRST YOU MUST PLANT THE SEED.

GROWING GOURDS IS RATHER SIMPLE. THEY ARE VIGOROUS GROWERS AND REQUIRE PLENTY OF SPACE TO SPREAD (140-200 SQ. FEET PER PLANT). THEY PREFER LOAM OR SANDY SOIL. REGULAR IRRIGATION AND LIGHT FERTILIZATION SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO GET YOUR PLANTS GROWING WELL. IF YOU ARE IN THE NORTHERN STATES, IT MAY BE NECESSARY FOR YOU TO START YOUR PLANTS IN POTS INDOORS TO ACHIEVE A CROP, SINCE THEY REQUIRE 120 DAYS OF WARM WEATHER. THEY ARE POLLINATED BY MOTHS AND OTHER NIGHT TRAVELING INSECTS, SINCE BLOOMS OPEN AT NIGHT AND EARLY EVENING.

HARVESTING OF GOURDS SHOULD BE IN THE FALL OR EARLY WINTER. THE VINES WILL DIE BACK AND THE MATURE GOURDS WILL BE HANGING OR SETTING ON THE VINE. IT IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO GET THEM PICKED RIGHT AWAY, BUT YOU MAY WANT TO PROTECT THEM FROM RODENTS. IT IS RECOMMENDED TO CURE YOUR MATURE GOURDS IN A WELL VENTILATED AREA, PERHAPS A BARN/GARAGE/CARPORT. GOURDS ARE 90%+ WATER WHEN FRESHLY HARVESTED AND IT TAKES TIME FOR THE WATER TO PERMEATE THROUGH THE TOUGH, HARD SHELL. THEY WILL BECOME MOLDY AND RATHER DISGUSTING TO LOOK AT OR BE AROUND, ANOTHER GOOD REASON TO LEAVE IN THE BARN OR GARAGE. IF THE GOURD SHRIVELS, THROW IT AWAY. HOWEVER, THEY SHOULD BECOME LIGHT IN WEIGHT AFTER A FEW MONTHS OF CURING.

WHEN YOUR GOURD IS DRY AND THE MOLD IS DRY, IT IS READY TO CLEAN FOR FUTURE USE. THE USE OF A SCRUB BRUSH OR STEEL WOOL, A TUB OF SOAPY WATER, AND SOME ELBOW ACTION WILL GET YOUR GOURD CLEAN. AFTER SCRUBBING ALLOW THE GOURD TO DRY THOROUGHLY AGAIN, AT LEAST 24 HOURS. THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TELL IF ALL OF THE MOISTURE IS OUT OF YOUR GOURD. NOW YOU ARE READY TO PAINT, CARVE OR DO WHATEVER YOUR CREATIVE GENIUS COMES UP WITH. HAVE FUN!!



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