

# 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](http://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](http://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

