

SCIENCE

FROM HOME



Gourd Growing Guide

Gourds are flowering plant species that grow fruit with hard exteriors. This group is one of the earliest domesticated plant types. Gourds have been used for food, tools or even musical instruments. Pumpkins are the most commonly known gourd in the United States due to Halloween traditions. Here we will explore what it takes to grow pumpkins and give advice on how to grow other gourds as well.

Know before you begin

- This activity can be done inside or outside
- All supplies are easy to find
- Adult supervision is recommended
- Please choose a safe space for this activity

Materials

- An open spot on the ground in full sun or a very large, deep container full of soil
- A pumpkin seed packet of choice (recommended) or the scooped pumpkin seeds from a jack-o-lantern
- Shovel or trowel
- Extra soil
- Vegetable plant fertilizer
- A watering can or container to pour water only the plant

Instructions

- If you want to grow pumpkins for the fall, start in the summer. If doing this indoors, start at any time.
- Start by preparing the soil. Dig using your trowel or shovel to break up the surface, adding some fertilizer to the soil as you mix the dirt.
- Plant 4 pumpkin seeds in the dirt 1-2 inches below the surface and then cover with dirt and then water.
 - Alternatively, plant your seeds in a mound of dirt. If following this method, water more often.

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- Wait. It takes time for plants like gourds to grow. Some gourds can grow and be harvestable in up to 100 days.
- Water your pumpkins once a week. Soil should be moist but not wet. Overwatering can be bad for plants, so err on the side of caution when watering.
- Let your pumpkins spread out a bit, and do not trim the vines. The more leaves, the better they will grow.
- Harvest your pumpkins once they are the right color and feel hard to the touch, cutting them off from their stems.
- Use your pumpkins for food, jack-o-lanterns or other decorations.

For other gourds and for best results:

- The steps above will work for many gourd varieties, including most ornamental gourds.
- If you want to increase your yield, consider adding mulch or other nutrient rich soil into a foot deep and wide hole that you plant the gourd seeds into, taking care to plant them vertically.
- You can start gourds indoors and shift them outdoors later. Frost is their enemy, so a head start indoors can be a good idea if you want an early crop.
 - If planting indoors, use a biodegradable pot that you can plant outside with the growing gourd.
 - Plants should have at least 4-5 full leaves before being transplanted outside.
- Gourds need space! If you are growing a group of them outside, give them at least 3 feet of space between plants.
- Pests don't have a big impact on larger gourd plants, but watch for them while your plants are small. Gourds are hearty, but everything is vulnerable when young and small.