

Latin Name/Genus: *Cucurbita maxima*, *C. pepo*, & *C. moschata* (Summer & Winter varieties); *Momordica charantia*, *Luffa acutangula* (specialty varieties).

Family: *Cucurbitaceae*

Difficulty: Easy (given enough space provided)

Season: Warm season

Exposure: Full-sun

Zone: Between Zones 3-10

Timing: Direct sow or transplant in late spring once the soil is warm. For transplants, start seeds indoors during the first two weeks of May. Optimal soil temperature: 25-35°C (77-95°F). Seeds should germinate in 7-14 days.

Starting: Sow seeds 2cm (1") deep. Sow 3 seeds in each spot where you want a plant to grow, and thin to the strongest plant. Space summer squash 45-60cm (18-24") apart in rows 90-120cm (36-48") apart; give winter squash and pumpkins more room with a minimum of 90-120cm (36-48") apart in rows 120-180cm (48-72") apart.

Days to Maturity: From transplant date.

Growing: Ideal pH for squash is 6.0-6.8. All squash grow male flowers first, followed by female flowers later - the female flowers have tiny fruits at the base of their petals and require pollination by bees for the most part. Incomplete pollination often happens at the beginning of the season, and results in misshapen fruits that are withered at the blossom end (just discard/compost these damaged fruits before they begin to rot).

Nutrient Preferences: Squash require lots of nutrients - use 1 cup of balanced fertilizer worked into the soil beneath each plant when planting/transplanting. Squash plants of all varieties appreciate the usual nutrient recommendations – nitrogen (especially during the leafy growth stage), phosphate, and potassium (both especially during the fruiting stage of growth).

Harvest: With summer squash, pick when small, because if the fruit get big, the plant stops producing; therefore check the plants regularly. With winter squash, test if the fruit is ripe by pressing your thumbnail into the skin (if you don't mark the skin and the stem is dry and brown, it's ready); cut the stem about 4cm (2") from the fruit; squash can survive a light frost, but store better if harvested before frost. In terms of storage, field-cure for 10 days in the sun, or cure indoors in a warm room for 4 or 5 days; to prevent mould, sponge the skins with a solution of 10 parts water to 1 part chlorine bleach. Store at 10-15°C with low humidity and good air circulation (ie. a shelf in the garage).

Disease & Pests: If experiencing bacterial wilt (*Erwinia tracheiphila*), remove and destroy infested plants. If striped or spotted cucumber beetles appear, control infestation as early as possible. If noticing





Squash

Plant Care Information

powdery mildew on plants, avoid wetting foliage if possible - water early in the day so that above ground parts of the plants dry as quickly as possible; improve air circulation by avoiding crowding plants and eliminate weeds around plants and garden area. If dealing with a viral disease, remove and destroy entire infested plant along with immediately surrounding soil and soil clinging to roots.

Companion Planting: The best companions plants for squash are corn, lettuce, melons, peas, and radish; avoid planting near brassicas or potatoes. Borage is said to improve the growth and flavour of squash, while marigolds and nasturtium repel numerous squash pests. Plant Phacelia, sunflowers, or buckwheat nearby to ensure increased pollination [by bees].