



Summer Vegetable Gardening Tips from Joyce Gemmell

Summer Squash Cucurbitaceae Family

The CUCURBITACEAE family has many forms and has been feeding the world since the beginning of recorded history. The remains of cucumbers and gourds have been found in archaeological excavations dating two centuries before Christ. Members of this family have origins in many different regions of the world. Only the cucurbita genus is thought to originate in North, Central and South America.



Squashes belong to the Cucurbitaceae family along with the melons, cucumbers, gourds and pumpkins. They are also divided into short and long maturities. The genera *Citrullus* and *Cucumis* include watermelons, cantaloupe and cucumbers. The genus *Cucurbita* includes winter and summer squash and some gourds, while the chayote is a *Sechium* and sponge gourd is a *Luffa*. In the Genus *Cucurbita*, *C. pepo* includes all the summer squash, all the true pumpkins and varieties that are both bush and long-vining.

Different varieties within an individual species will cross-pollinate but there is no crossing between varieties of different species. Remember that when a cross occurs you cannot see the change in that summer's fruit, but it will show up if you save the seed and plant it the next year.

Planting Dates:

Coastal region: Mid-March to August.

Inland Region: April to July.

SUMMER SQUASH is thin-skinned, immature or semi-mature when harvested; they mature in 47 – 60 days, depending on variety, which can be bush or vining types.

Zucchini is probably the most popular squash grown, although many people are trying the more exotic looking varieties like yellow scallop, green scaloppini and yellow crookneck.

Varieties among the zucchini include golden, pale green, dark green, striped and not-striped, round, spineless plants, plants with varie-

gated green and silver leaves and plants with large round and long, deeply-cut leaves. Some plants are dwarf and some are four feet square.



Summer squash is adaptable to many conditions; however their basic needs are sun, plenty of water and rich soil. They are prone to powdery mildew in our area and aphid and leafhoppers transmit virus diseases. The easy solution, if you have the room, is to successively plant every one and a half months after the first ones are planted and pull out the old plants as they decline. The most important point in harvesting is to pick the fruit small – as small as you would buy it in the market, or smaller, with the blossom still attached.

Varieties among the zucchini include golden, pale green, dark green, striped and not-striped, ridged, round, spineless plants, plants with variegated green and silver leaves and plants with large round and long, deeply-cut leaves.

VARIETIES (catalog sources 2010):

- BLACK JACK zucchini, 48 days, Stokes
- GOLD RUSH zucchini, 51 days, Stokes and Thompson & Morgan
- GOURMET GLOBE zucchini, 55 days, round, Thompson & Morgan
- GADZUKES Zucchini, 55 days, ridged, dark, and light green fruit with star0shaped slices, upright, vigorous plants. Burpee Seeds
- SUNBURST scallop, 52 days, vivid yellow, Nichols
- SUNDANCE full crookneck, 52 days, Stokes and others
- ORANGETTI spaghetti squash, 65 days, bright orange, Thompson & Morgan

Also check out ...

UC websites for the Vegetable Research and Information Center (<http://vric.ucdavis.edu>) and Integrated Pest Management (www.ipm.ucdavis.edu).

Nutritional Information...

180 g (1 cup)

Calories	27 Calories
Protein	2.05 g
Carbohydrate	4.84 g
Total Fat	0.65 g
Fiber, total dietary	1.8 g
Calcium	32 mg
Iron	0.67 mg
Potassium	475 mg
Magnesium	34 mg
Phosphorus	67 mg
Sodium	5 mg
Zinc	0.59 mg
Vitamin A	2011 IU
Vitamin B6	0.144 mg
Vitamin B12	0.0 mcg
Vitamin C	23.2 mg
Folate	50 mcg
Niacin	0.918 mg
Riboflavin	0.043 mg
Thiamin	0.063 mg

Source: USDA Database

