



Gourd Growing Tips

Hard Shell Gourds (*Lagenaria Siceraria*) need a good 120 growing days. These have white flowers and bloom late evening. Hard Shell Gourds can take 8 – 30 plus days to germinate depending the variety.

Ornamental Gourds (*Cucurbita Pepo*) need 90 day growing days. These have yellow flowers and bloom during the day. Ornamental gourds can take 8 – 21 days to germinate.

You can stretch their growing season by starting your seeds indoors, about a month before they'll go outside into *warm soil*.

We use this method for growing and germination testing. We soak all our seeds in 3% Hydrogen Peroxide. We have found that this has helped with increase germination success. The 3% hydrogen peroxide helps break down the shell, known as Chemical Scarification. In addition, Hydrogen Peroxide kills any fungus on the outside of the shell.

- Soak the seeds in Hydrogen Peroxide for 30 minutes and rinse well with water
- Directly Sow the seed in soil or you can pre-start seeds indoors. See below on how we start our seeds.

Next if starting seeds indoors (Read All below depending on what seeds you are starting)

- We use a heat mat with thermostat that keeps the soil/seeds around 75/78 degrees.
- Fill a tray with soil that is damp and set it on the heat mat
- After the Hydrogen Peroxide soak/rinse place seeds on top of the soil
- Place a double layer of damp paper towels on top of the seeds, and then a damp towel on top of the paper towel.
- We have a plastic cover that goes over our tray, but you could place a layer of plastic wrap on top of the towel to prevent evaporation. Key is to keep soil/towels damp not water logged
- Keep the soil/seeds *warm (at least 70 Degrees) with no drafts*
- No heat matt, my mom would put the seeds on top of the refrigerator
- Check seeds daily
- Once the seed sprouts plant in soil
- I have found that some varieties do not like the soil/paper towel method for germination. Seeds that do much better being placed directly in a pot filled with starter soil, making sure they are kept warm 70 – 85 degrees, are the larger varieties hard shell seeds (Giant Bushels, Africans, Green Drums, Large Kettles, Large Canteens, Zucca e, Cannonballs, Large Chinese and Cheese gourds).
- If you don't have a greenhouse or cold frames, then it is best to use a grow light; plants grown just by window light will likely become scrawny and pale and less likely to thrive. If using Grow light, you will need to slowly transition them outside.

If you are in Zone 7 or higher after the last chance of frost and your soil temperature is at minimum 70 degrees you may plant directly outside. Note: larger varieties like soil temperature 80 – 85 degrees for germination.

Another method that is often shared is the scarify for hard shell gourd seeds; using sandpaper, roughing up the edges a little bit. Do not do this method for the ornamental seeds. Details of this method can be found on the American Gourd Society website. I have found I am not good at this method and I have better results using the 3% Hydrogen Peroxide.

Gourds are heavy feeders! Plant them in very rich soil. We have a video that can be found on the Blue Whale Arts website, about fertilizers.

Do not try and harvest your gourds when they “get” to the size you want. Gourds need to be fully matured to dry well; leave them on the vines until the vine are dead. Let the gourds dry outside. During the drying process gourds will mold! Don't throw them out. Once dry, seeds most time of the time rattle, they are ready for cleaning and crafting.