

# GOURD SAFETY

## BASICS OF HEALTHY GOURDING

Adapted from the work of Joy Jackson and Jerry Lewis

When working with gourds, the following common sense measures and easy-to-find products will help keep you healthy and happily crafting. The measures and protective items mentioned below are the first steps to maintaining good health while working with gourds. They should be followed even if you don't notice any sensitivities at all.

**Latex Gloves:** Avoid direct skin contact with moldy gourds which have not yet been cleaned. Vinyl gloves like those used by the health industry can be purchased by the box at your local pharmacies and large chain stores. When scrubbing gourds, dishwashing gloves are recommended.

**Leather Gloves:** Wear leather gloves when carving, leather gloves protect you from cuts

**Mask or Respirator:** Airborne dust particles and mold spores from gourds should be avoided just as any other type of airborne particulate should be. A mask or respirator designed to prevent inhalation of these minute particles should be worn when cleaning the outside surface, sanding, cutting, and cleaning inside surfaces of a gourd.

**Work Outside:** Work with gourds outside whenever possible. If you must work inside, make sure you have good ventilation and a dust control system is strongly recommended. Store dirty gourds outside or in a shed/garage—never in the house.

**Avoid dust/clean-up after:** Dust particles and mold spores will cling to clothing and hair. Keeping your hair covered while stirring up gourd dust or mold is a good preventive measure. Change into clean clothes and wash the ones you were wearing after working with gourds at any stage (cleaning, sanding, cutting, carving, etc).

**Glasses or Goggles:** Helps prevent dust particles from getting into your eyes when sanding or cutting a gourd.

**Clothing:** Avoid loose garments because they can be dangerous when using power tools. Wear an apron to help protect your clothing from dirt, and getting caught by power tools

**Gripping Material:** Use of a waffle-like shelf liner in your lap will help keep the gourd from slipping out of your grip when you are working on it. You can sew the gripping fabric to the front of your apron so it is always available.

**Are you Allergic?** If you are new to gourds, you will soon learn your sensitivities to them, if any, and the measures you'll need to take when working with them.

- A metallic taste in the mouth is often the first sign
- Coughing or sneezing with runny eyes and nose