

Tips for Home Gardeners

Cucurbits

All members of the cucurbit family can be planted in May, but yields of squash and cucumbers may be lower than normal with the late plantings. Plant these outside well after the danger of frost is over. For transplants, start in pots two or three weeks before transplanting.

Recommended varieties of cucurbits are:

Cucumbers:

Slicing type - Dasher II, General Lee, Turbo, Lightning, Jazzer, Ultra Slice early, Speedway, Poinsett 76, Slice Master Select, Fanfare, Salad Bush and Sweet Success.

Pickling type - Calypso and Triple Mech.

Summer Squash

Gentry, Picasso, and Pavo.

Yellow Straightneck - Goldbar, Freedom II, Medallion, Monet, Gold Slice

Winter Squash

- Ultra Butternut, Butternut Supreme, Early Butternut (AAS), Carnival Acorn, White Swan Acorn, Sweet Dumpling Acorn, Tay Belle Acorn, Cream of Crop Acorn (AAS), Table King (AAS), Golden Delicious, Vegetable spaghetti, Tivoli Spaghetti (AAS), Golden Hubbard, Honey Delight Buttercup, Sweet Mama Buttercup.

Cantaloupes

Magnum 45, Hiline, Summet, Burpee Hybrid, Planters Jumbo, Zenith, Earlisweet, Harpers Hybrid, Gulfstream, Top Score, Saticoy Hybrid, Laguna, Top Flight, Primo, Supermarket Hybrid, Roadside, Classic, Ambrosia and Pronto.

Watermelons

Plant watermelons in May. Recommended varieties are Charleston Gray, Jubilee, Dixie Lee, Royal Sweet, Allsweet, Royal Jubilee, Dessert King, Patriot, Tendersweet, Crimson Sweet and Desert Storm. Apply 2 to 3 pounds of 6-24-24, 8-24-24 or 7-21-21 per 100 feet of row preplant. Sidedress with 3/4 - 1 pound of ammonium nitrate or 1 1/2 - 2 pounds of a complete fertilizer (6-24-24, 8-24-24, etc.) per 100 feet of row when vines begin to run. Remove all but three to four well-shaped fruits from each plant when they reach 4 to 5 inches in diameter. Try some of the icebox types like Mini Lee, Mickey Lee, Sugar Baby, Yellow Doll and Sweet Doll for fun. Also, BushJubilee and Bush Charleston Grey produce dwarf plants and nice fruit and are ideal for gardens.

Pumpkins

Pumpkins are much like winter squash, but the flesh is often coarser and stronger. For a small size, choose Spooktacular, Oz, Small Sugar, Spookie or Baby Bear (AAS). Trick or Treat and Triple Treat are large and small pumpkins with edible, hull-less seeds. Good medium-sized pumpkins are Big Autumn, Frosty, Casper (white), Peek a Boob, Funny Face, ProGold 526 and the AAS winner, Autumn Gold. Good large or Jack-o-Lantern types are Howden, Spirit (AAS), Gold Rush, Connecticut Field, Jumpin Jack, Jack of all Trades, Aspen and Wizard.

For Halloween pumpkins, plant seed in early July. Cushaws are large, long-necked pumpkins that have a meaty and finer-textured flesh. Miniature pumpkins have been bred for ornamental use. Varieties available include Munchkin, Jack-Be-Little and the white Baby Boo.

Cucurbit Hints

Don't be concerned if the first several squash fruit fall off the plant before they reach an edible stage. The



first flowers to form in early spring squash are the female flowers (with the miniature fruit). No male flowers form at this time, so no pollination takes place. In a few days, however, the male flowers will form, and normal fruit set will take place. In summer plantings, the male flowers tend to develop first, so no production occurs until the female flowers develop. Cucumber yields may be increased by growing plants on a trellis. To get cucumber vines to climb a trellis or fence, you may need to tie them to the trellis in the beginning. Once they catch hold, they will continue to climb.

Use pesticides on cucurbits late in the afternoon so as not to reduce the bee population necessary for pollination. Sidedress cucumbers, squash, watermelons and cantaloupes with 3/4 pint ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row as vines begin to run. Weekly applications of a general purpose fungicide (daconil or maneb) and insecticide (sevin or thiodan) starting at first bloom will protect the foliage and improve yield.