

2017 Special Garden Project Sunburst Summer Squash

Silly Squash

- The word squash is from the Algonquin word 'askoot asquash', meaning eaten green.
- Squash blossoms can be eaten either raw or cooked
- Pattypan squash are also called Peter Pans, scallops, scallopini, simlins, symblings or cymlings.
- Zucchini, crooknecks, pattypan, round, & yellow are all different types of summer squash

A Touch of History

Many plants were found growing here when Columbus discovered North America. We call these native plants.



The domesticated squash that we know today originated from the wild squash which was native to Mexico and Central America then moved to North America. The plant found its way to Europe when the early explorers returned home.

Squash's Family

Plants are grouped into families. Squash and cucumbers are related. They are in the same vegetable family called Cucurbitaceae.



It's important to know which plants are related because they sometimes have the same disease and insect problems.

When planning your garden, it's best not to plant crops from the same family in the same spot year after year. Use crop rotation to change the location where you put your plant families every year. Try not to put the same plant family in a location for 3 years.

Squash Planting Basics

Squash is a warm season crop. They are planted directly in the ground after the last frost date, usually in early to late May.

Warm soils allow the seeds to grow rapidly. Cold, wet soils will cause seeds to rot. Squash need warm weather to grow quickly.

Squash plants have separate male and female flowers on the same plant. Male flowers produce pollen, female flowers produce squash.



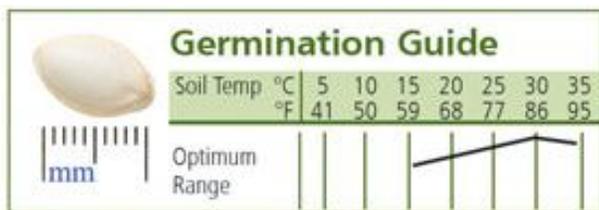
Where to plant?

The squash plant will produce the most fruit, squash, in full sun. This is an area that will receive 6-8 hours or more of direct sunlight a day.

Squash will do best in fertile, well-drained soil. Make sure to leave enough room between hills, or plant groupings. The more crowded the plants are, the more they will grow together and better chance for diseases.

To prepare the soil, spade 6 to 8 inches deep; then work in about a two inch layer of organic matter. Organic matter is good for all soil types. It helps sandy soils hold water better. In clay soils, it improves drainage so excess water drains away quicker and oxygen is then available to roots. Roots need oxygen to grow and function. Organic matter also adds nutrients to soil as it decomposes.

Compost and manure are examples of organic matter. Do not use fresh manure in spring. It can burn seedlings or cause some plants to grow lots of leaves or stems. Manure is best added in the fall.



How to Plant Summer Squash

Direct Seeding: Hill Method

Crops like squash are often planted in the center of small mounds, also known as hills, about 4 to 6" high and a couple of feet across. This benefits these plants because it provides extra drainage.

Plant 4 to 5 seeds ½ to 1 inch deep on each "hill". Space the hills 4 to 6' apart. If the soil is warm and moist, seedlings will emerge in 7 to 14 days.

After the seedlings are two to three inches tall, remove all but two or three plants per hill.

Direct Seeding: Row Method

Plant the seeds in a row about 18-24" apart and space rows 6' apart. The spacing between the plants allows for easier picking.

Succession plantings, or planting again every 2-3 weeks, may be needed to ensure a continuous supply of squash.

Basics of Squash Care

Watering:

Squash will need about 1 inch of water a week. Try to keep the soil just moist. At each watering, moisten the soil about 6-8" deep. Let the soil dry out slightly between waterings. Do not overwater. This decreases the soil oxygen, which roots need to grow steadily.



If you use a sprinkler to water the garden, try to water in the morning. This will allow the leaves to dry off throughout the day and decrease the possibility of disease. Also try to avoid working around the squash while they are wet, as this can spread disease.

Mulching:

After the seeds begin to emerge, place a 2" layer of mulch around squash to conserve moisture, keep soil

temperatures cooler, and reduce weeds. This will help roots to grow quickly and steadily.

Mulch should not touch plant stems. Use dried *brown* grass clippings or shredded wood. Do not use green grass clippings as they can "heat up" and damage plants. Too deep of mulch can make soils water logged and lack oxygen, or attract insects and slugs.

Weeding:

Weeds steal water and nutrients from plants, causing them to grow slower. Control weeds when they're small by hoeing, hand-pulling or mulching.



Do not hoe too close near squash stems or too deep near the roots, because this may cause damage to the plants.

Fertilizing:

Squash do not need a lot of fertilization. Additional fertilizer may not be needed if they were planted in soils that had added organic matter. If you do fertilize, use a well-rounded, water based fertilizer once the plants begin to bloom.

Common Squash Problems

Squash Bugs- Adults are brownish black and have a flat back.

Nymphs and adults suck plant juices out of the leaves and stems.



Scout often and squish when found.

Poor Fruit Set- can be caused by poor pollination. Strong winds and cool temperatures reduce bee activity so pollination is reduced. Sometimes early in the season or in the heat of summer the plant produces just male flowers.

Squash Vine Borer- the immature larvae of this flying insect bores into the stem of the squash causing the leaves to suddenly wilt and die. Look for insects and frass (insect poop) inside the stem.



Blossom End Rot- An early season issue which causes the blossom end of the squash fruit to shrivel up and turn brown. The reason is the squash plant steals calcium from the fruit and puts it into the quickly growing stems and leaves. To prevent this from happening, try to maintain consistent moisture and use mulch.



Harvest & Exhibiting Tips

Harvesting Squash

When picking squash, be sure to use extra care to make sure the stems remain attached and that the squash don't get scratched or bruised. The skin will mark easily when nicked. Choose uniform, insect-free vegetables. Dirt and debris can be removed by running the vegetable under running water, but don't scrub. On the way to the fair, think about individually wrapping the squash in paper towels to prevent rubbing or scratching of the skin.

Exhibiting Squash

Fresh Sunburst Summer Squash should be entered in the 'Yellow Summer Squash' Class G-773-235.

Bring 2 squash following the guidelines in the publication "Selecting and Preparing Vegetables, Herbs, and Fruit For Exhibit at County Fairs and the Nebraska State Fair" (http://4h.unl.edu/documents/SelectingPreparingVegHerbFruit_6-24-13.pdf). The desirable traits the judge is looking for are squash that are at the same maturity and uniform in size, ideally between 3-5" in diameter. Avoid selecting squash that is too large, over-mature, soft, or missing their stems.

Sunburst Squash

Sunburst squash is an All-America Selection that has yellow, scalloped shaped fruits with bright-green blossom ends. The squash is as attractive as they are tasty. The plants are very productive and are an All-America Selection winner for its early fruit production and for producing a large number of fruits per plant. On average it will take about 52 days from seeding date until the squash is ready to harvest.



*Photo courtesy of Johnny's Select Seeds

All-America Selection (AAS)

AAS History

Before AAS, in the 1920's and 30's, consumer magazine editors knew little about new garden varieties and had few resources to obtain reliable information. As a result, articles were sometimes misleading or incorrect.

In 1932, W. Ray Hastings proposed the idea of All-America Selections as a way for home gardeners to learn which new varieties are truly improved. He encouraged all seed companies to set up trial grounds, cooperatively test new varieties and agree to develop marketing efforts for new vegetables and flowers. Mr. Hastings recommended a national network of trial grounds throughout North American climates where flower and vegetable varieties would be grown and assessed by skilled, impartial judges. The seed trials would accept only new, previously unsold varieties.

AAS Today

AAS was founded in 1932 and the first AAS Winners were announced a year later, after the results were tabulated from the first trial. AAS Winners have been introduced each year since 1933. In 1934, there were 30 AAS Award Winning new varieties introduced, a record number.

All-America Selections National and Regional Winners have been tested for garden performance by a panel of expert judges. Varieties that perform best over all of North America become AAS National Winners. Entries that performed particularly well in certain regions are named AAS Regional Winners. The AAS Winners offer gardeners reliable new varieties that have proven their superior garden performance in Trial Grounds across North America, thus, our tagline of "Tested Nationally and Proven Locally®".

The AAS Winner label is like a stamp of approval. All AAS Winners are bred or produced without using genetic engineering.

Careers

Horticulture is the science and art of growing and using fruits, flowers, vegetables, ornamental plants and grasses to enhance our living environment. A horticulturist is a person who works with plants. They can have many different jobs from plant breeding, to growing the crops, to even processing and moving of plants.

Fill out the Special Garden Project Evaluation at: <http://go.unl.edu/2017sunburstsquash>

A degree in horticulture can offer the following career opportunities:

- Educator
- Field or Lab Researcher
- Floral Designer
- Greenhouse Manager
- Horticulture Entrepreneur
- Landscape Designer
- Landscape Contractor
- Nursery Manager
- Plant Breeder
- Plant Propagator or Grower
- Vineyard Manager

Want to find out more about careers like this in horticulture? Visit UNL Agronomy and Horticulture Department at <http://agronomy.unl.edu/>

Using Squash

Summer squash is very adaptable. The squash can be eaten raw, cooked, fried, frozen for later use, or used in baked goods. The flowers can be eaten raw or stuffed and cooked. Below are a few ways to use squash.

Zucchini Chocolate Chip Cookies

Makes about 2 dozen

Ingredients and directions:

Combine below ingredients in large bowl.

- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ cup, butter, softened
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ⅓ cup honey
- 1 Tablespoon vanilla extract

Combine in a separate small bowl and blend into liquid mixture.

- 1 cup white flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg

Stir these into other ingredients, mix well.

- 1 cup finely shredded zucchini
- 12 ounces chocolate chips

Drop by spoonful onto greased baking sheet, and flatten with the back of a spoon. Bake at 350° F, 10 to 15 minutes.

Crunchy Vegetable Wraps

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Serves 4

Cups of Vegetables per Serving:

½

Ingredients:

- ½ teaspoon Ranch salad dressing and seasoning mix
- 3 tablespoons cream cheese, fat-free
- ¼ cup broccoli, chopped
- 2 tortillas (spinach or whole wheat)
- ¼ cup carrots, chopped and grated
- ¼ cup zucchini, cut into small strips
- ¼ cup yellow summer squash, cut into small strips
- ½ tomato, diced
- 2 tablespoons green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 tablespoons chives, chopped fine
- ½ medium Summer Squash

Preparation:

- 1.) In a small bowl, stir Ranch seasoning into cream cheese, chill.
- 2.) Steam broccoli in microwave for 1 minute with 1 tablespoon of water.
- 3.) Spread cream cheese into tortilla, staying one inch from the edge. Sprinkle vegetables over cream cheese. Roll tortilla tightly.

**Don't forget to fill out the
Special Garden Project Evaluation at:**
<http://go.unl.edu/2017sunburstsquash>



Filling out the evaluation will register you for a gardening prize as well as a certificate good toward the 2018 Nebraska Extension Special Garden Project.

Information compiled by Elizabeth Killinger, Extension Educator

Squash history: <http://www.hungrymonster.com/food-facts/>

Squash photo: https://www.lovefarmorganics.com/?page_id=1223

Squash plant photo: <http://www.motherearthnews.com>

Squash blossom photo: <https://extension.umd.edu/growit/vegetable-profiles-summer-squash>

Blossom End Rot photo:

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/blossom_end_rot_causes_and_cures_in_garden_vegetables

Squash vine borer photo: <http://digitaldiagnostics.unl.edu/index.php?menu=faq&mon=6>

All America Selections Info: <http://all-americanselections.org/about/>

Cookie Recipe:

<http://food.unl.edu/documents/Jones%20Summer%20I%202011%20Local%20Foods.pdf>

Wrap Recipe: <http://food.unl.edu/documents/Summer%20Squash.pdf>

Sunburst Squash & squash seed photo courtesy of Johnny's Select Seeds, Johnnyseeds.com, 1-877-564-6697.

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