

ANOTHER HERB HERBERT FACT SHEET

SPECIAL INTEREST HERBS

GOURMET VEGETABLES GOURDS

Cucurbita species



DESCRIPTION
Gourds have been grown and harvested for many years, and were formally known for their use as utensils and tools. They are better known today for their decorative features and qualities, being used as ornaments and birdhouses. There are generally two types of gourds, with one of which being 'Cucurbita' or 'soft-skinned gourds'. Soft-skin gourds are oddly-shaped and very colorful. Although they can be dried and stored, their colors do tend to fade over time. 'Lagenaria' or 'hard-skinned gourds' generally grow green on the vine and turn a brown color when they begin to dry. Drying your gourds is an important and essential step if you wish to make a birdhouse or ornaments. This process requires time. Gourds must first be washed to remove any soil, but must be handled carefully to avoid bruising. Place gourds in a well ventilated area with good air circulation, such as a garage. Turn your gourds regularly to ensure they dry evenly, and discard any with 'soft spots' as this indicates that the gourd is rotting. It is important to remember that gourds are not to be consumed, as eating the vegetables may cause harm. Some types of gourds include the following:
Bottle. Small to medium bottle shaped vegetable. 6 x 2in/15.2 x 30.5cm. 110 days.

Small Fruits Mix. A great selection of uniquely shaped fruits. Can be dried and used for holiday table decorations.
Winged Mix. A half hardy annual. Give a coat of varnish to make colors last longer. Excellent for making crafts, dippers and ornaments.



USES
Although gourds cannot be eaten, their interesting shapes, colors and textures make for fantastic ornaments and decorations. Whether it be for a birdhouse, a special holiday decoration or a simple carving for your mantle, gourds are great fun for those interested in crafts.



GROWTH
Gourds are said to be very easy to grow, and are said to be very closely related to cucumbers, squash and melons. Gourds prefer sandy soils and like mulch and compost. As they are a vine plant, they also like a fence or post to climb on, but are also fine without one.



CULTIVATION
Gourds that are to be dried and used for decoration should be harvested towards the end of the season, when most of the vines have died. It is generally said that when harvesting, at least 2in/6.05cm of the stem should be left. Stems should also be twisted, not cut.



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