



**CORNELL
COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION OF
ONEIDA COUNTY**

HOME GROWN FACTS

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GROWING WINTER SQUASH



Also known as Butternut squash, Acorn squash

Winter squash are easy to grow -- if you have room. In addition to the familiar butternut and acorn squash, varieties come in a staggering diversity of fruit size, shape and color. Choose bush varieties if space is tight.

Site Characteristics

Sunlight:

- full sun

Soil conditions:

- requires well-drained soil
- requires high fertility

Prefers well-drained, fertile, loose soil, high in organic matter with pH between 5.8 and 6.8. Plentiful and consistent moisture is needed from the time plants emerge until fruits begin to fill out.

Plant Traits

Lifecycle: annual

Tender annual

Ease-of-care: easy

Height: 1.5 to 3 feet

Spread: 3 to 15 feet

Most varieties grow on vines that spread 6 feet or more. If space is tight, choose smaller bush or semi-bush varieties.

Bloom time:

- mid-summer
- late summer

Flower color: yellow

Foliage color: medium green

Foliage texture: coarse

Shape:

- low and trailing
- climbing / vine

Shape in flower: same as above

Helping You Put Knowledge to Work

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, NYS College of Human Ecology, and NYS College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, Cooperative Extension associations, county governing bodies, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating.

Growing Information

How to plant:

Propagate by seed—seed can be saved 6 years

Germination temperature: 60 F to 105 F - Will not germinate in cold soil. Wait to plant until soil reaches at least 65 F -- preferably 70 F or more. Germinates best at 95 F.

Days to emergence: 5 to 10 - Should germinate in less than a week with soil temperature of 70 F and

Maintenance and care:

Squash like warm soil and are very sensitive to frost. So don't be in a rush to plant early in spring. Wait until danger of frost has passed and soil has warmed to about 70 F, or about 2 weeks after the last frost date.

Unless you are trying to grow a long-season variety in an area that gets early frosts, there's really no need to start winter squash inside. Instead, direct seed ½ to 1 inch deep into hills (which warm and drain earlier in the season) or rows. Sow 4 to 5 seeds per hill. Space hills about 4 to 8 feet apart, depending on the size of the fruit. (The larger the expected size of the squash, the larger the vine and the farther apart you should space the hills.) When the plants are 2 to 3 inches tall, thin to 2 to 3 plants per hill by snipping off unwanted plants without disturbing the roots of the remaining ones. In rows, sow seeds 6 to 12 inches apart in rows 4 to 8 feet apart. Snip off plants to thin to one plant every 18 to 36 inches.

If you need to start plants early, plant inside in 2- to 3-inch pots or cells 3 to 4 weeks before transplanting outside. Sow 3 or 4 seeds per pot and thin to one or two plants by snipping off the weaker plants to avoid damaging the roots of those that remain. Harden off by cutting back on water and reducing temperature before transplanting. Plant transplants out in the garden at the same final spacings above after all danger of frost has passed.

Black plastic mulch can speed growth, especially in cool, short-season areas. At the end of the season, remove or till in vines to reduce mildew. Use row covers to protect plants early in the season and to prevent insect problems. Remove before flowering to allow pollination by insects or when hot weather arrives.

Mulching plants helps retain moisture and suppress weeds. Mounding soil around the base of the plants can discourage squash borers from laying eggs.

Pests:

Squash bug - Hand pick. Bury or compost plant residues after harvest.

Squash vine borer - Remove by hand. Butternut squash is resistant.

Striped cucumber beetles - Construct tents of fine netting or cheesecloth or use floating row cover over young plants. Put in place at planting and remove before flowering. Control of beetles may be a factor in preventing bacterial wilt.

Diseases:

Bacterial wilt (*Erwinia tracheiphila*) - Remove and destroy infested plants. Control cucumber beetles if they appear.

Powdery mildew - Avoid wetting foliage if possible. Water early in the day so aboveground plant parts will dry as quickly as possible. Avoid crowding plants. Space apart and eliminate weeds around plants and garden area to improve air circulation.

Scab - Avoid wetting foliage if possible. Water early in the day so aboveground parts can dry as quickly

as possible. Avoid crowding plants, Space apart and eliminate weeds around plants and garden area to improve air circulation. In autumn, rake and dispose of all diseased leaves and fruit. Do not save your own seed.

Viral disease -Remove and destroy entire infested plant along with immediately surrounding soil and soil clinging to roots. Eliminate wild cucumber and milkweed nearby. Control aphids early in the season.

Other diseases:
Downy mildew

Varieties

Whether they are *Cucurbita pepo* (the same species as summer squash) *C. moschata*, or *C. maxima*, most varieties of winter squash produce sprawling vines. If space is tight, grow bush or semi-bush varieties.

Winter squash come in a staggering array of sizes, shapes and colors. If your season is short, avoid varieties that require a long growing season (100 or more days).

'Cornell's Bush Delicata' is a 2002 All-America selection that combines the flavor of an heirloom Delicata with good resistance to powdery mildew and compact growth habit.

Some varieties recommended for New York include:

Butternut: Bugle, Harris Butternut, Ponca Baby, Waltham Butternut, Zenith

Acorn: Carnival, Sweet Dumpling, Table Ace, Table King Bush, Table Queen (a.k.a Ebony), Tuffy,

Buttercup/Kabocha Type: Ambercup, Autumn Cup, Burgess Buttercup, Sweet Mama, Sweet Meat

Hubbard Type: Blue Ballet, Hubbard, Red Kuri

Miscellaneous: Delicata, Gold Nugget, Harlequin, Sweet Dumpling, Vegetable Spaghetti

This publication may contain pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly, some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold, and/or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialist or your regional DEC office. **READ THE LABEL BEFORE APPLYING ANY PESTICIDE.**

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