

Texas Agricultural Extension Service

Easy Gardening Squash

Sam Cotner *



All types of squash are popular garden vegetables. Squash will grow well in all Texas areas. Like most vining vegetables, squash grows best in sandy, fertile soils.

Soil Preparation

Work the soil 8 to 10 inches or deeper. Remove rocks and trash, and rake the soil smooth. Work the soil only when it is dry enough not to stick to garden tools.

Fertilizing

Add 2 to 3 pounds of fertilizer such as 10-10-10 for each 100 square feet of garden area. If you plan to grow only a few plants, use 2 to 3 tablespoons of fertilizer for each plant. Scatter the fertilizer evenly over a 2 foot by 2 foot area. Work it into the top 3 to 4 inches of soil.

Varieties

<u>Summer Squash</u>		<u>Winter Squash</u>
<u>Yellow</u>	<u>Green</u>	
Goldie	President	Butternut
Gold Bar	Senator	Waltham
Multipik		Early Butternut

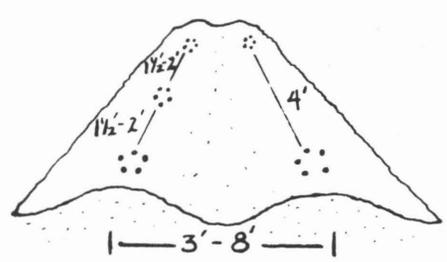


Fig. 1. Plant squash on rows 3-8 feet apart.

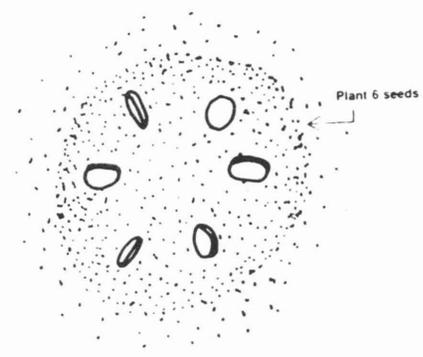


Fig. 2. Plant five to six seeds in each squash hill.

Planting

Squash does not grow well in cold weather. Plant in the spring after all danger of frost has passed. For a good fall crop, plant early so the squash will mature before the first killing frost.



Fig. 3. When squash plants are 3-4 inches tall, thin to three plants per hill.

Plant bush type squash in hills 18 to 48 inches apart on rows 3 to 8 feet apart (Figure 1). Vining types, such as hubbard or acorn, need more room.

When seeding squash, plant the seeds about 1 inch deep. Plant 5 to 6 seeds in each hill (Figure 2). Water after planting the seed. After the seeds come up, thin them to three squash plants per hill (Figure 3).

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Fig. 4. Be careful when hoeing around squash plants so you will not hurt the roots.

Watering

Water the plants enough to keep them from wilting. Water them once a week or more often in real dry weather. Sandy soils need to be watered more often than heavy clay soils.

Care During the Season

Keep squash plants free of weeds. Hoe around the plants to remove small weeds. Hand-pull the weeds close to the plants (Figure 4).

When the first blooms appear, place about 2 tablespoons of garden fertilizer around each plant. Do not let the fertilizer touch the plants. Water the plants after fertilizing.

Insects and Disease

Check your squash for harmful insects. All kinds of squash need some types of insects, especially bees, for pollination. Using unneeded insecticides can kill these pollinating insects and greatly reduce yields.

Squash can get many diseases, especially when harvesting begins. Spray with an approved fungicide to help control most diseases.

Ask your county Extension agent what to use to control squash insects and diseases. Follow directions on the container.

Harvesting

Harvest yellow and green (summer) squash when the fruit and seeds are small. Always harvest squash which are ready so the plants will keep producing. Harvest winter (hard rind) squash when it is full sized, the skin is hard and the bottom of the fruit is cream-to-orange in color. A light frost will not damage fruits of winter squash. Squash is best when cut, not pulled, from the vine.

Serving

Fresh squash adds color and variety to meals.

Green and yellow squash are fair sources of Vitamins A and C. Winter squash is a good source of Vitamin A. It has fair amounts of Vitamin C.

Squash can be served in many ways, from fried dishes to casseroles. Winter squash often is baked. Cook all types of squash only until tender to keep the vitamin content.

Storing

Green and yellow squash can be stored in the refrigerator for about a week. Winter squash can be stored for several months.

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