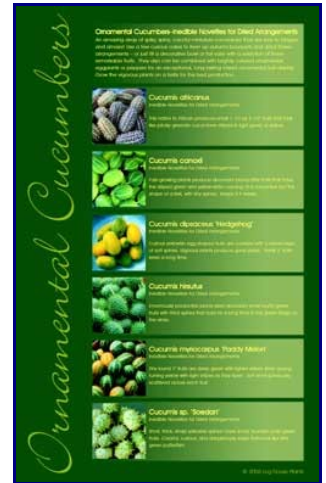
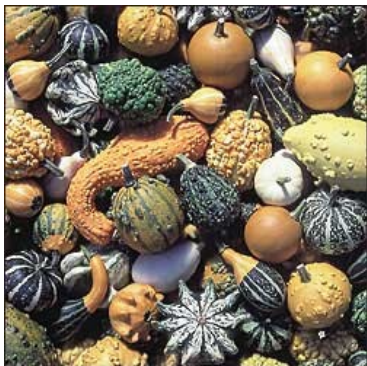


## ORNAMENTAL CUKES

These fascinating non-edible cucumbers are extremely easy to grow and use for dried arrangements! Collected several years ago on a visit to India, they are grown just like regular slicing or pickling cucumbers, but instead of big plain eating cucumbers, the plants produce tons of curious, spiny, inedible little fruits with tons of character for crafts and ornamental displays. They dry more easily, hold their color better, and store even longer than gourds. Leave them in clusters on their vines to add a little surprise to a dry flower bouquet, or fashion them into funny little creatures in a creative crafts project for kids. To see images of our collection, including prickly *Cucumis africanus*, tiny 'Paddy Melon,' and the blowfish *Cucumis* 'Soedan,' visit the [Ornamental Cucumber poster](#) on our website.



## DECORATIVE GOURDS



Yes, it's almost here... Summer solstice occurs June 20 at 4:59 in the Pacific Northwest, and finally the nights are heating up enough to set out warm-season crops like peppers, squashes, melons, and gourds. Gourds are a relative of edible veggies that have been grown for thousands of years throughout North America and the world, prized for their usefulness as storage vessels, tools and utensils. In addition to their utilitarian potential, dried gourds have also become a favorite element of decorative autumn centerpieces and displays.

Grow gourds like you would a pumpkin or vigorous, vining winter squash, in widely spaced rows or hills. The sprawling plants need a lot of room if grown wild; or you can provide a sturdy trellis or other support to keep the fast-growing vines from taking over the garden and for cleaner fruit. They need a sunny, well-drained site and a long growing season to mature, so don't wait too long to plant them!

If possible, leave the gourds on the plants until their stems dry out and turn brown, but remove them before the first frost. Cut the gourds from the plants, leaving a few inches of stem attached. Handle them carefully to keep them from bruising and save only fully mature, intact fruits for drying. Soak in bleach water (1 cup bleach to 3 gallons of water) for 30 minutes, allow them to dry thoroughly, then set in a single layer in a dark, well-ventilated area for about a week to let their skins harden. Check them often and throw out any that have soft spots or signs of decay or mold. To fully cure the gourds, leave them in a warm, dark, well-ventilated place for another 4 weeks or so, turning from time to time so they cure evenly and checking for mold (which can be wiped off), or signs



of shriveling or decay (these should be thrown out). Once finished curing (when they feel very light in weight and you can hear the seeds rattling around inside), each gourd can be waxed, painted, crafted, and/or decorated however you like.

Which variety you grow depends on what you plan to use the gourds for. The large, round 'Bushel' gourd is (like its name suggests) ideal for a rustic storage container; 'Small Spoon' can be dried and hollowed out for a utensil; and you can dry 'Birdhouse/Bottle,' drill a hold in the side, and hang it in a tree for nesting birds to find. 'Rupp Fancy Wartyed,' 'Autumn Wings,' 'Goblin Eggs,' and others are multicolored collections in fun shapes and sizes for decorative fall displays. See our veggie list for [full descriptions](#) of our 20+ varieties, including pictures of many of them.



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