

# Growing Your Own

## A beginner's guide to gardening

# Summer Squash

**S**ummer squash is a low-growing, bush-type squash. Examples are yellow (straight and crookneck), scalloped, and zucchini. They are fast growing and well-liked garden crops.

### Varieties

#### Yellow straightneck

- Fortune
- Multipak
- Seneca Supreme
- Smoothie
- Sunbar
- Zephyr

#### Crookneck

- Dixie
- Prelude II
- Sundance

#### Scalloped

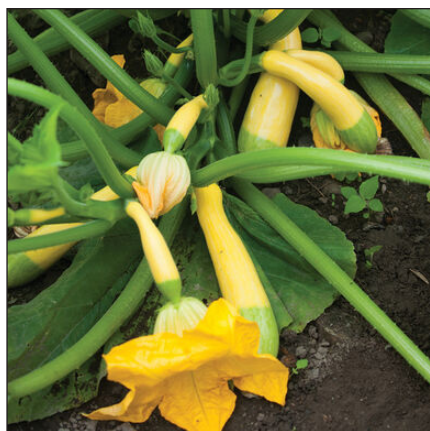
- Patty Pan
- Scallopini
- Sunburst

#### Zucchini

- Dividend
- Dunja
- Eight Ball (round type)
- Gold Rush (yellow)
- President
- Revenue
- Spineless Beauty
- Zucchini Elite

### How much to plant

Summer squash should yield about 15 pounds per 10 feet of row. Two to three hills of summer squash per person is plenty for fresh-from-the-garden use.



Zephyr

(Photo: Johnny's Selected Seeds, johnny-seeds.com)



Sunburst

(Photo: Johnny's Selected Seeds, johnny-seeds.com)



Dunja

(Photo: Johnny's Selected Seeds, johnny-seeds.com)



# How and when to plant

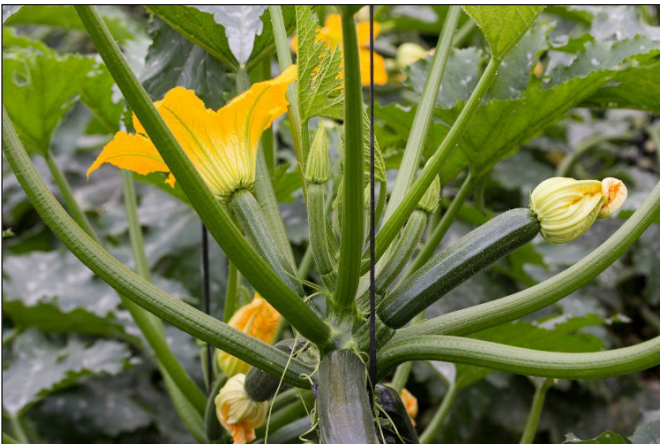
Squash is a warm season crop. Soil and air must be above 60°F before planting. The soil should be moist at planting time, but not wet. Use the following information to know when to plant.

Region	Early planting	Late planting
Central Kentucky	May 10	August 1
Eastern Kentucky	May 15	July 15
Western Kentucky	April 20	August 15

Summer squash can be planted in raised beds or in hills, which will help with water flow and drainage. Hills should be about 18 inches across and 3 inches high. Hills should be spaced 3 feet apart with 4 feet between rows. Plant four seeds in each hill. Plant them 2 inches apart and 1



When transplanting a squash seedling, cover the roots completely, and gently firm the soil around the plant.  
(Photo: Matt Barton, UK CES Agriculture Communications)



Zucchini grow and mature very quickly. The zucchini fruit are often ready to harvest just a few days after flowering.  
(Photo: Antonio Jose Cespedes; Pixabay)

inch deep within each hill. When seedlings are 4 inches tall, thin to the best one or two plants.

Squash can also be transplanted rather than direct seeded. If using transplants, plant one squash plant every 18 inches. A high nitrogen fertilizer is suggested once the first harvest is made. This will help increase the future yield. Call your local [county Extension office](#) for how much to use. Multiple plantings may be necessary if you want a continuous supply of squash throughout the summer. For more guidance on direct seeding or transplanting, refer to *Growing Your Own: Preparing Your Garden* (NEP-219) at [www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/NEP/NEP219/NEP219.pdf](http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/NEP/NEP219/NEP219.pdf).

# Pests and diseases

Although easy to grow, summer squash can often have issues with many different insect pests and diseases. Cucumber beetles are yellow green insects with black stripes or spots. They feed on plants and transmit a disease that causes young plants to wilt and die. Squash vine borer is a plump white worm that tunnels into the base of the plant. Powdery mildew is a white powdery growth on the leaves that causes them to turn yellow. In order to produce fruit, female squash flowers must be pollinated by bees (and sometimes other types of pollinators) with pollen from male squash flowers. Rainy, cloudy, or cool weather could result in less bee activity, which could cause poor pollination. Poor or no pollination results in



Powdery mildew on squash.  
(Photo: Gerald Holmes, California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org)





Spotted cucumber beetle on squash.

(Photo: Clemson University-USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, Bugwood.org)



Striped cucumber beetle on squash.

(Photo: Scott Bauer, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org)



Misshapen fruit caused by poor pollination. This is not a pest or disease issue, and fruit is safe to eat.

(Photo: Gerald Holmes, California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org)



Squash vine borer feeding on the stem.

(Photo: Gerald Holmes, California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org)



Female summer squash flower being pollinated by bees.

(Photo: Rachel Rudolph, Extension Vegetable Specialist)

misshapen fruit that could look like a disease but is not. Misshapen fruit is safe to eat. In order to protect bees and other pollinators, do not spray insecticides when they are present. Contact your local [county Extension office](#) for more guidance on how to manage pests and diseases.

## Harvesting

For straight and crookneck summer squash, harvest when they are 4 to 6 inches long and 1½ to 2½ inches wide. For scalloped or patty pan types, harvest when they are 3 to 4 inches in diameter. Once the plant starts making squash, pick often in order to prevent squash that are too large. Plants may need to be harvested every day during peak season. If the squash gets too large, the taste and texture will change.



Almost all varieties of summer squash and zucchini do well in Kentucky.

(Photo: Rachel Rudolph, Extension Vegetable Specialist)

## Clean Up

After the last harvest of summer squash, remove all plants. Lightly till the soil with a hoe or rake. Plant a new crop of unrelated summer vegetables. Clean up the fall summer squash once cold weather causes plants to wilt. Plants may be placed in a compost pile.

## Serving

Summer squash is a mild-flavored vegetable that combines well with herbs and seasonings. Try it with basil, allspice, rosemary, and marjoram. Cook as a vegetable or use in stews, casseroles, and main dishes. It can be grilled, steamed, boiled, sautéed, fried, or used in stir-fry recipes. Squash is low in calories; the raw vegetable contains only 20 calories per cup. It also contains vitamins A and C, and is naturally free of fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

## Storing

Store unwashed summer squash in the crisper drawer in a plastic bag with holes in it. Wash the squash just before cooking or eating. Squash will be best if consumed in two to three days after harvest. However, the fruit can be stored for a longer time and can be cooked and eaten as long as it remains free of rot. Squash do not freeze well.

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