

MOLES SEEDS

Squash - Courgette, Marrow and Winter Squash

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ555

Courgettes and marrows are essentially the same vegetable harvested at different stages of maturity. Leaving some courgettes to swell to become marrows is a good way to get both vegetables from a single plant.

Courgettes are the smaller immature fruits with marrows the large ripe fruit version - however specific courgette varieties have now been bred to be at their best when small, with better taste and texture. Also available are varieties bred to specifically produce marrows. Summer squashes such as Patty Pan are used much like courgettes.

Moles Seeds lists a wide range of 'winter storage' squash, of which the most familiar is butternut squash. These varieties tend to have thicker skins to aid storage.

For retail plant sales, the large seeds are sown directly into 8cm pots where they rapidly germinate at 18-21°C and be ready for sale around three weeks after sowing. As they are frost tender, it is not recommended to offer them for sale before May, local climate dependent.

Propagation and Growing-on

Courgettes and marrows like a well drained humus rich soil in an open sunny position with a dressing of mulch. The seed needs a minimum of 18-21°C to germinate which generally takes 5-8 days. For early crops, sow in the greenhouse mid-late spring in peat pots, alternatively sow outdoors directly into the bed late May to early June.

The plants are quick growing so water regularly and feed if growth appears slow. You may need to help pollinate the flowers by removing the male flowers from the plant and bushing the pollen onto the female flowers which have the fruit developing behind. Hand pollination is not often required and is usually only needed with plants grown under cloches and frames.

Also available on the market are parthenocarpic varieties, meaning they can set fruit with out pollination. This means weather conditions, light levels or lack of pollination insects is no longer a problem for a courgette or marrow crop.

Spacing

Space at 60-120cm by 90-150cm, giving a plant population of around 5,000 to 18,000 per hectare.

Harvest

Summer Squash

Begin harvesting courgettes when the young fruits reach 10cm long. Picking young fruits encourages the development of more fruits. Leaving the fruits to reach 20-25cm produces a marrow. To test the ripeness of the marrow push your thumbnail into the surface near the stalk, if this is easy it is ripe for picking.

Winter Squash

Fruits should be removed from the plant and left in the field for a few days to harden. Once in store, too high a temperature will cause squashes to lose weight and moisture, whereas temperatures below around 10°C may damage the fruits and risk disease attack. The best conditions are a well ventilated store held between 10-15°C where fruit can last up to six months.

Pest and Disease

Squash plants suffer from a few problems which also affect the cucumber family - such problems are:

- Powdery mildew
- Basal stem rot
- Red spider mite
- Grey mould (Botrytis)
- Eelworm
- Root rot
- Cucumber mosaic virus

Check catalogue descriptions to select resistant varieties where available.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.

(12/15)

