



# HOW TO GROW SQUASH

*Sweet, filling and nutritious, squash is a joyful addition to any growing space with some varieties storing so well you can enjoy the fruits of your labour well into the winter months.*

## When and how to sow your seeds

Squash can either be sown directly in pots from April or straight into beds outside from May onwards once the threat of frost has passed. They are extremely cold sensitive so make sure to cover the plants with fleece to keep them protected if there will be low temperatures.

## Transplanting

Transplant squashes outside once all frost risk has passed, spacing plants 1x1m - 1.5x1.5m (depending on the variety) into a well weeded bed and water in well.

Squashes are heavy feeders and benefit from a good dose of compost or well-rotted manure being added to the soil before planting. They are also sensitive to wind so try to find a sheltered spot in your growing space. They also do well planted straight into a compost heap!

## Plant care

Once planted, squash will grow rapidly and take up a lot of space with their long trailing stems. While the plants are getting established, keep the beds weed free. Water plants regularly, especially during dry weather.

## Disease and pests

Powdery mildew can become a problem when growing squash, especially if the soil is dry. Make sure to water well and mulch to retain moisture around the base of the base. Be sure to remove any infected leaves if you spot them early on in the growing season.

## Harvest

Make sure to harvest squash when the fruits are fully mature to ensure a good storage life. Unless there is a risk of frost, leave squash as long as possible on the

vine, even after the foliage has begun to die back and the main stem is cracked and dry.

Cut the vine either side of the stem and bring them inside to store somewhere warm (ideally 25 degrees) to cure for at least 10 days. A warm sunny windowsill can be the perfect spot.

Once squash is cured, they should be stored somewhere cool and dry and out of reach of rats and mice. Squash definitely becomes a delicacy for them as the winter months draw in.

## Seed Saving

Squash varieties easily cross pollinate and if you are growing them to save seed from it is important that you hand pollinate. More information on this can be found on our website.

Allow squash to fully mature and cure. Cut them open, taking care not to damage any seeds. An ice cream scoop is a great tool for scooping the seeds and pulp out. Separate the seeds from the pulp and spread out in a single layer to dry on a plate for at least two weeks. You can give them a wash with water before drying if there is lots of pulp stuck to them.

### Our recommended varieties

- Delicata is an intensely sweet variety with a shorter shelf life
- Oregon Homestead Sweet Meat is a large, beautiful variety with a great shelf life
- Meruhen produces 1kg fruits with very sweet, orange flesh