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virginia home food production

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SUMMER SQUASH

MAR 8 1981

DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Reprinted January 1981

MH 415

ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

LIGHT: sunny

SOIL: well-drained

FERTILITY: medium-rich

pH: 6.0 - 7.5

TEMPERATURE: warm (65-75°F)

MOISTURE: average



CULTURE

PLANTING: seed after danger of frost is past and soil has warmed.

SPACING: hills (2-3 plants/hill)
3-4 ft. x 4-6 ft., single plants
2-3 ft. x 3-5 ft.

HARDINESS: very tender annual

FERTILIZER NEEDS: heavy feeder, sidedress one week after blossoming begins (1½ oz. (33-0-0) per 10 feet of row); repeat three weeks later.

CULTURAL PRACTICES:

Summer squash grows on non-vining bushes. There are many

varieties having different fruit shapes and colors. The immature fruits are eaten before the skin hardens into maturity. Most varieties of summer squash produce seven to eight weeks after planting and continue to bear for several weeks.

Plant summer squash after danger of frost is past in hills, three to four feet apart with two or three seeds in each hill, with four to six feet between rows. Single plants not in hills may be spaced slightly closer at two to three feet apart, with three to five feet between rows.

Soil containing plenty of well-rotted compost or manure is the ideal, although good crops may be grown in average soils which have been adequately fertilized.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and September 30, 1977, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. W. R. Van Dresser, Dean, Extension Division, Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061; M. C. Harding, Sr., Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia 23803.

For extra early fruit, plant seeds in peat pots in greenhouses or hotbeds and transplant about three weeks later. Squashes are warm season plants and do not do well until the soil and air temperatures are above 60°F.

Seed or transplants can be planted through black plastic. Cover seed with one inch of soil.

Squash plants have male and female flowers on the same plant, but they are separated. Pollen must be transferred from the male flowers to the female by bees. Use insecticides late in the evening to prevent killing bees.

COMMON PROBLEMS

DISEASES: powdery and downy mildews, blossom blight, bacterial wilt

INSECTS: cucumber beetles, squash vine borers, pickle worm

CULTURAL: blossom end rot (irregular moisture or calcium deficiency) flower drop (may occur normally when female flowers form before male flowers or during periods of heavy fruit set).

NUTRITIONAL VALUE

	<u>Grams</u>	<u>Calories</u>
Cubed or dice, 1 c. cooked	210	30
	<u>% U.S. RDA</u>	
<u>Riboflavin</u>	<u>Vitamin A</u>	<u>Vitamin C</u>
10	15	35

HARVESTING AND STORAGE

DAYS TO MATURITY: 50 - 65

HARVEST:

Harvest when immature - only about 6-8" long and 1½-2" in diameter for elongated types, 3-4" in diameter for patty-pan types, and 4-7" long for yellow crooknecks. If the rind is too hard to be marked by the thumbnail, it is too old. Remove old fruit to allow new fruit to develop. Check plants daily once they begin to bear.

APPROXIMATE YIELDS: (per 10 feet of row) 20 - 80 lbs.

AMOUNT TO RAISE PER PERSON: 10 - 25 lbs.

STORAGE: cool (32 - 50°F), moist (90% RH) conditions; 5-14 days.

PRESERVATION: Usually in cool, moist storage, may can as pickles or relishes or freeze.

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