

- Keep in mind that vine type varieties of plants will take up a great amount of room.
- Cultivars within the pumpkin, squash and gourd species can cross pollinate. This will not affect the current season's crop but will negatively affect seeds that were saved for the next season.
- All cucurbits love warm temperatures. By using black plastic as a ground covering to warm the soil, it may possible to almost double production.
- Melons require heavy watering during flowering and fruiting. The demand lessens as the fruit ripens.
- Melons are ripe when tapping them produces a dull, hollow sound. The bottom of the melon where it touches the ground should be pale yellow or whitish. The stem should separate easily from the melon with thumb pressure. Muskmelons should exhibit a tan background with tan netting on the rind.
- Summer squash should on the smaller side and have skin that is tender enough that it can be pierced by your thumbnail when picked.

# Green Tips

## Plant and Grow Guides

### *Melons, Cucumbers, Squash & Pumpkins* (GT 109)



Melons, cucumbers, squash and pumpkins all belong to the same family and are referred to as cucurbits (gourds are an inedible close relative). Since they are all closely related, they share a number of things. They require full sun, warm weather, soil that is continuously moist and sandier soil for good root growth.

**MELONS**-there are several kinds of melons that can be grown successfully in home gardens. Melons require a long growing season and should be put into the garden as transplants after danger of frost has passed.

Muskmelon or cantaloupe-will grow well in sandier soils. Most have orange flesh and are tan outside with tan netting when ripe.

Watermelon-In Michigan, the season is not long enough to successfully grow the large watermelon varieties. Often, the smaller, round watermelons do best and can be put in as transplants.

Honeydew, casaba, Persian, Crenshaw and winter melons are all cultivars of muskmelon but grow best in semi-arid climates.

For more information and other helpful educational materials, contact:

Gretchen Voyle, Horticulture Educator  
MSU Extension - Livingston County  
2300 East Grand River Avenue, Suite 111  
Howell, MI 48843

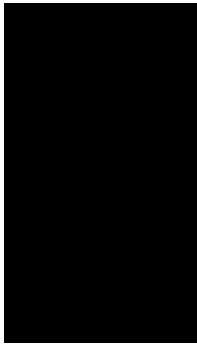
517-546-9850 Fax: 517-546-5154  
<http://co.livingston.mi.us/msuextension>

**CUCUMBERS**-can be divided into smaller pickling cucumbers and larger slicing cucumbers.

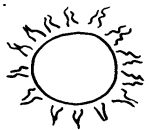
**SQUASH**-there are summer squash varieties with tender skin: zucchini, crookneck and straightneck, scallop or patty pan. These are picked when small and tender.

There are also winter varieties with a hard shell that are able to be stored for winter use: These are acorn, buttercup, butternut, carnival, delicate or peanut, Hubbard, sweet dumpling, spaghetti and turban. These are left until the end of the season to mature and picked before a hard frost.

**PUMPKINS**-many kinds are available. Pie pumpkins are smaller and sweeter and are used for eating. Pumpkins should be picked before a hard frost. Pumpkins do not have the ability for long term storage. The skin never becomes as hard as winter squash.



**What to Grow** - When choosing what type of cucurbits to grow, it will depend on how much room is available. Bush varieties of zucchini, scallop, straightneck and some acorn squash will form compact plants.



For small gardens, bush type plants work well.

Cucumbers can be trained to grow on a fence or trellis.

If the garden is large, there may be room for the vine cucurbits like pumpkins, melons and winter squash.

Because of the weight of the fruit, they cannot be grown on a trellis or fence.

### PREPARING THE SOIL

Composted organic matter can be worked into sandy or denser soils to improve the texture. Follow your soil test recommendation or use 2 pounds 5-20-20 per 100 square feet of the soil surface. Turn or till in to a depth of 8 inches and add another pound of fertilizer per 100 square feet.

### HOW TO PLANT CURBITS

All these plants require a very warm soil to have seeds germinate. Cucumbers require 60-95 degrees F; squash, 70 - 95 degrees F; melons, 75 - 95 degrees F and pumpkins at 70 - 90 degrees F. Watermelons and muskmelons do best if small plants are transplanted into the garden when the chance of frost has passed. If these plants are put into soil that is below the range listed, seeds may not germinate and transplants grow slowly and are more prone to disease. Follow the planting directions on the seed packet.

### HOW TO GROW CUCUMBERS

Cucumbers can be directly seeded into the garden when danger of frost has passed and the soil is the correct temperature because they grow rapidly. They can also be purchased as transplants. Train the vines to a trellis or fence for cleaner vegetables and less damage. It may be necessary to tie the plants with strips of soft rope or cloth.

### HOW TO GROW MELONS

Melons do best when put in as transplants. They can be seeded directly but having a good harvest is less likely.

### HOW TO GROW PUMPKINS AND SQUASH

Plant bush type squash closer than vine type and pumpkins. If extremely large pumpkins are the goal, use transplants. Remove all except one or two pumpkins per vine. Regular watering and fertilizer are necessary. Pumpkins that are frosted will begin to decay rapidly.

### OTHER IMPORTANT DETAILS

- If cucumbers are bitter or are not well developed, the blossom end of the fruit, there was not enough consistent moisture when they were developing.
- Choose cucumber varieties carefully. Slicing cucumbers can be used for slicing or for pickles when they are small. Pickling cucumbers cannot be used for slicing. When they are big enough for slicing, they are soft.

