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ALABAMA A&M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES

Horticulture Notes

Harvesting Gourds

If you've been wondering if it's time to harvest the gourds you've been growing all summer, here are a few steps to follow to harvest and preserve gourds.

1. Harvest gourds when they stop growing in size and vines begin to die back (when leaves and vines begin to wither and turn brown). Inadequate water during the growing season can cause gourds not to reach their mature size. Discard any immature or diseased gourds. You will not be able to preserve them and they may pass disease problems along to other gourds.

2. Harvest gourds with a sharp knife or pruning shears, leaving an inch or two of stem on the fruit.

3. Next, wash gourds in warm, soapy water to remove any disease organisms or debris. You may add a small amount of chlorine bleach to the water to disinfect the gourds. This will not cause any discoloration of the gourds.

4. Dry each gourd carefully with a soft cloth to avoid bruising or scratching the tender skin.

5. Surface drying requires about 1 week and allows the outer skin to dry and set the gourd color. Gourds can be spread out on several layers of newspaper in a warm, dry room with good air circulation. Turn gourds daily and change out any damp newspaper.

Another way to dry small gourds is to hang them on a line by stringing them through their stem. Large gourds are generally too heavy to string.

6. The internal drying process requires about 2 to 3 weeks. Move gourds to a warm, dry, DARK area with good air circulation. Darkness helps preserve the color.

Gourds can be decorated in any number of ways for all sorts of uses. You might want to start with a wax or polyurethane coating for a glossy finish. Let your imagination run wild!



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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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