

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

How to: Dry gourds for decorating

Many people grow plants in their gardens for beauty while they're growing, like flowers, or for consumption or sale after they're ready for harvest, like vegetables. However, items like gourds and pumpkins can be grown throughout the season and then, if dried correctly, can be displayed afterwards for a fall feel.

In addition to the fall-like decorative asset gourds and dried pumpkins bring to the atmosphere, they also can make great containers if emptied correctly.

Which gourds to grow for decorating:

With lots and lots of different gourd types out and available for gardeners, it may be tough to choose the right variety to grow in your garden. Despite all the options, there are two main types of gourds that are used for decorative use. These are the soft-skinned gourds and the hard-skinned gourds. Soft-skinned gourds are the colorful gourds that come in yellows, green, oranges and golds and look similar to squash or corn. They can come in funny shapes. After drying, their colors may begin to fade in a few months. Hard-skinned gourds are the Birdhouse, Dipper and Bottle gourds. They are green when growing on the vine and will eventually turn brown or tan.

The process of drying gourds is the same regardless of if they are soft-skinned or hard-skinned. The gourds are ready to be harvested when stems dry out and become brown in color. Once this happens, cut the



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gourds off the vine but leave a few inches of stem intact. Be sure to harvest before a hard frost because the frost can damage the gourds. Get rid of gourds that are bruised or rotted.

Curing happens next. Clean the surface with soapy water and allow them to air dry. Then, place the gourds in a well-ventilated area out of the sun for one week. The skin will begin to harden and change color.

Next, move the gourds to a dark area and leave them for six months. Make sure they are stored in a single layer and do not touch each other. Make sure there is enough airflow by placing the gourds on a screen or hanging the gourds. Get rid of the gourds that begin to decay, but if mold appears you can wipe it off and continue to dry the gourds. Make sure to turn the gourds onto a different side every couple of weeks so they can be well dried.



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What's next?

When the gourd is light but hard to the touch, it is likely to dry. Shake the gourd, and if you hear the seeds rattling inside, it is dried correctly. Once this occurs, the gourds are ready for you to paint, display or carve them into containers. If a hard-skinned gourd is rough on the outside still, you can use sandpaper or steel wool to file the roughness down.

At Urban Farmer, we have a wide variety of gourds and pumpkins on our website at [ufseeds.com!](http://ufseeds.com)



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