

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

From seed to harvest: Winter squash

Although winter squash is grown during warm season, it's a frost-tender vegetable. The main difference between winter and summer squash is winter squash is allowed to reach maturity on the vine in which its skin is very thick, unlike summer squash which is harvest while its skin is still soft. Popular varieties of winter squash include butternut, acorn, banana and spaghetti squash.

To plant:

Sow seeds directly into the garden no sooner than three weeks after the last frost as soil temperatures need to have warmed to at least 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Sow the seeds approximately 2 inches deep and sow them in hills, with 4 to 5 seeds per hill spaced 3 to 4 inches apart. The hills should be 6 to 12 inches tall.

To grow:

Once the squash has sprouted, thin the seedlings to the two strongest ones. Add cages or trellises around the seedlings so they have something to climb. The squash grows best in full sun and in soil with a pH of 5.5 to 6.8. Keep the soil evenly moist, because this is how squash grows best. Some of the best companion plants for winter squash includes nasturtiums, bush peas and beans. When planting, avoid planting the squash in the shade of taller plants.

To harvest:

Winter squash can take 60 to 110 days to be ready to harvest after sowing. They are ready to harvest when their rinds are full color and firm. You should not be able to dent the rind with your thumbnail when it is



[Winter squash seed available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)

ready for harvest. Make sure you complete your harvest before the first hard frost. To harvest the winter squash, cut the squash from the vine, don't pull it. When cutting it from the vine, leave two or three inches of stem on the squash because this will allow the fruit to be stored longer.

What winter squash craves:

Winter squashes can benefit from fertilizer. Prior to planting, mix an aged compost in with the soil. You should also side-dress the beds with aged compost midway through the season. In addition, you can add a side dressing of compost tea every two to three weeks throughout the squash's growing season. If feeding with fertilizer, use a 5-10-10 blend. Avoid fertilizing the squash with a high-nitrogen fertilizer.

Where to buy winter squash seeds:

You can find a wide variety of winter squash seeds on our website at [ufseeds.com!](http://ufseeds.com)



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