



THE YEAR-ROUND POTAGER

SQUASH 'SWEET DUMPLING'

Try these striking, high-yielding edibles with excellent flavour that are perfect for a variety of culinary uses

Squash can be enjoyed in a range of dishes including soups and pies, and are also delicious when roasted. The variety 'Sweet Dumpling' is an attractive addition to any outdoor space due to its impressive markings. Seeds should be sown outdoors where they are to crop during May, 1.5cm deep directly into finely-prepared, well-drained, fertile soil which has already been watered. You can harvest yields from September-October.



Plant squash seeds in a tray filled with good-quality potting compost, one seed per individual cell. This will give them the best chance of germinating. Place them 1.5cm deep so that their roots can develop.



Label your crops, then water your tray well and place it in a warm position – a temperature of 15-20°C is ideal. Make sure that you keep the growing medium moist, but do not overwater as soaking your seeds can make them rot.



Seedlings should appear in seven to 14 days as long as the ideal care has been given to the crops. You should gradually accustom the edibles to outdoor conditions before planting, but make sure that you avoid frosts.



When the threat of frost has passed, plant out your seedlings from May-June, 90cm apart into well-drained, fertile soil. Remove them from the tray carefully to avoid damaging their roots before placing them into the earth.



Photography by GAP Photos.

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Your squash plants require plenty of water. Keep the soil constantly moist by irrigating around the crops, not over them, as this could cause problems such as rot. Do not allow your edibles to dry out.

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As your plants develop, continue to irrigate them regularly – this is especially important if you have chosen to cultivate your crops in a raised bed. Squash tendrils will slowly expand, so make sure you leave them room.

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Once your plants flower and start producing fruits, feed them every 10-14 days with a high-potash liquid fertiliser. You don't have to waste the flowers of squash, they are delicious in risottos or filled with cheese.

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'Sweet Dumpling' produces a large number of small, beautiful fruits with a bold striped pattern. These are excellent for stuffing or baking individually. One plant can yield up to 15 edibles with outstanding flavour.

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Use secateurs to harvest summer squashes between September and October when they are quite small – about 100g in size. If desired, fruits can be left until November and stored in a frost-free, well-ventilated place.

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Store squash for up to six weeks and enjoy the yields of your crop. Make the most of their versatility – you could use them as decoration in your home, or to create a range of delicious and healthy meals.

GYO'S TOP TIPS



POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Powdery mildew: This appears as a white powder over the surface of leaves, which then become stunted and shrivel up. This can be prevented if the soil is kept moist.

Lack of fruit/rotting: Growing conditions are the cause of fruiting difficulties – when the weather in early summer is cool, there is not sufficient pollination. However, once the weather improves, pollination will pick up, allowing the plant to correct this problem itself and fruit successfully.

Grey mould: This can be an issue in densely-sown crops. Seedlings can suddenly collapse when afflicted by grey mould – this normally occurs in wet conditions, with the mould usually entering through a wound. It can affect buds, leaves, flowers or fruits, with plants eventually shrivelling and dying. Ensure that any infected material is removed and destroyed. If you follow the correct instructions for growing squash and leave them enough room, you shouldn't encounter this problem.

