



GOURDS

Harvest gourds when they feel firm and the skin is hard. A browning and drying of the stem is also evidence that the gourd is ripe. Except for the first few well-ripened fruits, the best treatment is to leave gourds on the vines until frost is possible. When harvesting, use a sharp shears or knife and leave a few inches of the stem attached to avoid bruising the fruit. This stem sometimes drops off as the gourd dries, but if it remains intact it may enhance the decorative effect.

After harvesting, wash the gourds in warm soapy water and rinse them in clean water to which a household disinfectant has been added. This removes any soil and soil-borne bacterial clinging to the shell. Dry each gourd with a soft cloth to avoid bruising or scratching the tender skin.

To remove surface moisture, spread the gourds out on several layers of newspaper in a warm, dry place. Space the gourds so that they do not touch. This allows air to circulate and speeds drying. Turn the fruits daily and replace newspapers that are dampened by moisture absorbed from the gourds.

Surface drying takes about one week. During this time the outer skin hardens and the surface color sets. Some fruits that are not mature will begin to shrivel or develop soft spots. These gourds should be discarded to prevent developing molds and bacteria from spreading to healthy gourds.

For the final drying, wipe the gourds with a soft cloth soaked in household disinfectant; then spread them on newspaper in a warm, dry, dark place such as a closet floor, a dry, warm basement or under a bed or chest of drawers. Let them sit for three to four weeks. Heat encourages rapid drying; darkness prevents fading of color, and dryness discourages mold and mildew. Gourds can be displayed in their natural state or treated with wax or shellac.

Cooperating Agencies: Washington State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Spokane County.
WSU Extension programs and policies are consistent with federal and state laws and regulation on
nondiscrimination regarding race, color, gender, national origin, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation.
Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.
