

## Young Gourd Sprouts

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The young sprout of a gourd seed can be very interesting to watch grow. Upon sprouting from the seed, it can grow as much as 1" to 2" or more in a days time. Sprouts can be very fragile when handling and transferring from a "rag doll" method to soil. The "rag doll" method in reference to, is a method commonly used. Place the seeds in a wet towel, wrap in plastic bag, and set in a warm environment approximately 80°F to 85 OF, and leave to sprout. Check periodically to make sure the towel is still wet. Depending on variety, usually they will sprout in 3 to 7 days. After sprouting, and they have attained their "hair roots", they should be placed into moist soil (eg. potting soil).

With moist fingers or a moist non-damaging tool, plant them to a depth to the bottom of the cotyledon (the first leaf). When transferring the sprout into the soil, make sure you have a fairly deep planter (3" to 6", depending on size of seedling), to allow plenty of room for roots to grow. Gourds can be grown to full maturity in a 5 gallon bucket with proper drainage. Keep young sprouts in planters for approximately 2 weeks, or more if planter is large enough. Try to keep them at a moderate temperature of approximately 70°F to 85 of, with about the same amount of light as normal sun, while maintaining temperature even at night. Do not over water, keep soil moist.

Transplanting from planters to the soil where they will mature is normally done when the plant has at least 6 leaves or more, counting cotyledons. Results from planting the seeds directly into our "gourden", can achieve probably the best results (eg. less strain). With the growing season being quite lengthy for some varieties, pre-sprouting may be necessary though.

Fertilizers may be mixed thoroughly into the soil in small amounts prior to planting (eg. 12-12-12). Fertilizer may also be added onto the soil and mixed in lightly after the plant has initially once become established.

Cold nights can cause some strain and has even been known to kill them. A temperature of 45°F or less can be quite chilly, and possibly cause damage if the plants are left uncovered.

Strong winds can cause a loss of vigor, drying a young plant out, and possibly killing them if left unprotected. Sometimes a simple mound of dirt can make a quick and effective windbreak.

Cucumber beetles and other pests can destroy a young plant in a short period of time. Measures may need to be taken, if pests appear to be actually "pests". On occasions, the cucumber beetle may be your only pollinator. Generally blooms don't come on until 45 to 60 days or later, depending on variety. A very large number of cucumber beetles can wipe you out quickly, in a matter of 24 hours in severe cases.

Young sprouts can be very vulnerable in some situations. A watchful eye and experience can be your best teacher. Try a couple different plantings, in case you lose some, hopefully you'll have some to watch grow. Plants can be very vigorous and prolific once they are well established in good growing conditions.

This information is of my own knowledge and experiences. I do not tend to promote or demote any certain methods or practices. Gourds can be very interesting and lots of fun. Give gourds a try, and GOURD LUCK !