

Squash is a member of the cucurbit family. It is locally known as “Kalabasa” or Calabaza.” It is a monoecious annual crop whose stems are long-running or short and bushy, soft-to-hard, and round-to-angular. Adventitious roots are also commonly formed at its nodes. Flowers are solitary with lemon yellow to deep orange color.

Seed Preparation

Soak the seeds in clean water for 24 hours. Pre-germinate seeds by wrapping it with moist cloth and incubate in a dark place until seed coat breaks.

Planting

- Squash can be directly seeded to the pots or germinated in plastic trays and transplanted later. For direct seeding, sow 2-3 seed per pot at a depth of 2cm. Use potting medium of 10 inches in diameter with a height of 15 inches. The bigger the pot the better.
- If transplanted, sow seeds in seedling tray/box with a potting mix composed of coir dust or rice hull, compost, and garden soil at 1:1:1 ratio. Water before and after sowing. Water regularly. Transplant at 2 weeks after emergence. In backyard gardens, squash can be grown with trellises to maximize space. You can use sticks or any available material as trellises.



Trellising and Pruning

- At 5-leaf stage, cut the shoot of the plant to encourage branching. Maintain only 2 main vines where fruits will develop. Normally, squash is left to creep in the field without trellis. However, it can be grown with trellises to maximize space and for better fruit development. Improvise trellis using available materials like sticks/bamboo, galvanized wires or plastic twines or let it creep along fences.



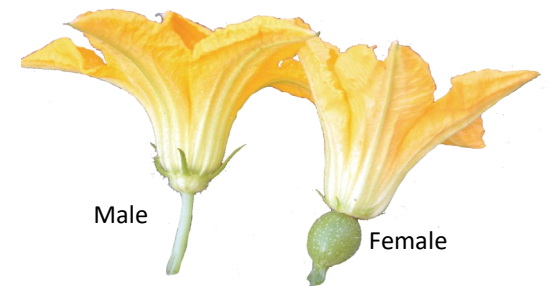
Water and Nutrient Management

- Water the plants every other day and every time you apply fertilizer. Stop watering when the fruits reached mature green stage for better fruit quality.
- Before transplanting, add a handful of compost/vermicast/manure to the hole as basal fertilizer. To boost plant vigor, apply weekly (spray or drench) organic probiotics preparations like IMO, Vermitea, FAA, OHN and FPJ during vegetative stage. During reproductive stage, apply FFJ, CalPhos or OHN to support flower & fruit development.

- For non-organic production, add 1 tbsp. of complete fertilizer (14-14-14) in the hole then cover it with a handful of compost prior to planting. One month after planting or when vines are 1 meter long already, apply 1 tbsp. of urea by burying it in a 1-inch deep hole 3-4 inches away from the stem. Two weeks after, apply 1 tbsp. of potash (0-0-60). Depending on the crop stand, repeat application of urea and potash after 15 days.

Hand Pollination and Thinning

- For better fruit development, hand pollinate by rubbing the pollen from the male (anther) flower to the female (stigma) flower between 6:00-8:00 AM when they are fully open. One male flower can pollinate 2-3 female.
- Remove all side vines before and near the fully developed fruit. Remove all deformed/damaged fruits while still young to avoid nutrient competition. At least maintain 1-2 well-developed fruit per main vine.



Pest Management

- Aphids and squash beetle are the prevalent insect pests of squash, while powdery mildew and mosaic virus are the common diseases.
- For insects, you can use OHN and botanical pesticide preparations such as hot pepper and lemon grass extracts, ginger extract, tomato extract and others. For powdery mildew, you can use OHN and other botanical fungicides such as extracts of onion , ipil-ipil, kamantigi and takip kuhol. For non-organic production, you can use appropriate chemical pesticides available in the market.

Harvesting

- Immature green fruits can be harvested 30-40 days from pollination. Matured fruits are harvested when powder like coating develops and when rinds harden or when peduncle starts to dry up. To prolong storage, harvest the fruit with a portion of peduncle attached.

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Source:

- Squash Production, PCARRD

Images:

- Pinterest.com
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SQUASH PRODUCTION

(For Urban and Home Gardening)



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