

How To Grow Tatume (Cucurbita pepo) Squash

45 days — 'Tatume', also known as 'Tatuma' and 'Calabacita', is a vining plant that is a popular staple in Southwestern and Mexican cooking. Unlike other squash varieties that are categorized as either a summer or a winter squash, 'Tatume' is a rare variety that can be used as either. Make sure you've got some room when you plant this bad boy, as it will run and spread out.

'Tatume' fruit can be harvested and eaten young (at about 45 days) as a summer-type squash. At this "summer" stage, harvest the green, round to oval fruits when they are about the size of a baseball. They are unusually firm for a summer squash and have a fine flavor.

Leave them on the vine as a winter squash and they will mature to a diameter of six to eight inches and golden-yellow in color.

You can direct sow outside after danger of last frost. Plant in hills of 2-3 plants per hill at 36"-48" apart, and 1" below soil surface.

Otherwise, you can sprout seeds in damp paper towels; start them in pots, or plant directly in the center of a raised bed or below a trellis.

Once the plants are growing, put high quality mulch a few inches thick at their base. This will keep the soil damp where the feeder roots are, keep down competing weeds, keep squashes from rotting on damp soil, and make it easier from vine rooting varieties to develop multiple roots.