

How to Grow Acorn Squash

Instructions

1. Choose a location for your acorn squash carefully, as these plants need a lot of room to grow. With their long vines and large heavy fruit, acorn squash plants will overtake the garden if not given their own space to spread out. Full sun is the ideal lighting environment for growing acorn squash, and they thrive in rich, well-drained soil enhanced with plenty of compost.
2. Sow acorn squash seeds directly in the garden in warmer climates. Be sure to wait until all danger of frost has passed, as they will need warm soil to germinate. Planting acorn squash in hills is ideal for the best drainage, and thinning seedlings as they sprout to leave no more than three plants per hill is advised. Hills should be spaced about three feet apart. Keep your newly planted seeds moist, but not drenched, as waterlogged seeds will rot.
3. Start your acorn squash seeds indoors if you live in an area with a short growing season. Plant seeds in pots, using a rich and well-drained potting medium, about three to four weeks before the last frost. Transplant your young acorn squash seedlings into the garden once the threat of frost has passed, placing them in hills approximately three feet apart. Be sure to water them well after transplantation, and then keep them moist, but not soggy. Shading seedlings from direct sun for a few days after they have been planted outdoors can help prevent wilting as they adjust to their new environment. Mulching is unnecessary, as the large leaves of the acorn squash plant provides much the same protection from moisture loss in the soil, in effect, mulching themselves.
4. Keep a sharp eye on the condition of your acorn squash plants. Pests can become a problem during the growth period of the acorn squash, particularly squash vine borers and squash beetles. To reduce the risk of pest damage, be sure to avoid planting acorn squash near other vine type plants, such as summer squash, zucchini, and cucumbers. Pesticides are available to deter these invaders, both chemical formulas and organic ones.
5. Harvest your acorn squash in the fall, before the first frost. Acorn squash is ripe and ready for picking when the skin becomes hard enough to resist a puncture by your fingernail. Cut the fruit from the vine, leaving a stem about an inch long attached to the squash. Wipe the squash clean with a damp cloth and store in a cool, dark place to prevent spoilage.