

SQUASH



Plant group: Cucurbit

Start under cover: March – May

Plant out: May – July

Harvest: September – November

Choosing Seed

Use organic seed where possible. Good sources are:

The Reading Food Growing Network (www.readingfoodgrowingnetwork.org.uk) seed swap events,

The Organic Gardening Catalogue (www.organiccatalogue.com) for Butternut, Uchiki Kuri,

or Suttons seeds (www.suttons.co.uk) for Crown Prince.

Sowing and Planting

Start under cover in spring in small pots and sow each seed on its edge to avoid rotting. Once the seedlings have 4 or so leaves, and all danger of frost has passed, plant them out about a metre apart. For best results, scoop out a hole and fill with compost, plant seedling, water in and gently firm soil around it. Seedlings can be planted through weed suppressing membrane if you want to avoid too much maintenance through the season. Small seedlings can be subject to snail and slug damage, so keep an eye on them. Once established, squash plants have few problems.

If you want to grow larger squash, limit fruits to 4 or 5 per plant.

Harvesting

In the Autumn, harvest as required. Squash can be left to grow on, but make sure you harvest all before the first frosts arrive. Cut the squash from the plant leaving a small stem – this will ensure better storage.

Storing

Stored in a cool, light place, the squash will continue to ripen for a few more weeks. Depending on the variety, squash will last for a few months, so can be enjoyed throughout the winter.

Growing in Containers

Squash plants take up a lot of space, so are best in open ground, unless you have a very large container, and space around it for the plant to spread out.