

# Gourd Luffa Cee Gwa, Sze Qwa

## *Luffa aegyptiaca*

**Family:** Cucurbitaceae (Gourd family) includes watermelon, gourds, melons, pumpkins, cucumbers.

**Native:** India.

**General Information and Uses:** There are two types of Luffa gourds: Luffa aegyptiaca, or smooth Luffa, has large, cylindrical growing from 12" - 18" long. This is the gourd grown primarily for the sponge but is also edible when harvested young (4" - 6").

Luffa acutangula, or angled luffa, has ridges running its length and is primarily used for cooking. Both are also known as Chinese okra. There are several culinary uses of Luffa: > Simmer young leaves and flower buds in boiling water until they are tender. Serve with butter and a pinch of curry.

> Slice and stir-fry. > Stuff with vegetables, rice and bake @ 350 degrees for 1 hour. > Slice or dice and toss in a salad like cucumber. > Roast mature seeds.

**Hardiness:** Annual. Warm season. Very sensitive to frost.

**Variety Information:** Vine. 110 days. 12" - 18" gourd that is thicker at one end, making it look somewhat like a baseball bat.

**When to Plant:** OUTSIDE: Spring, 1-2 weeks after last frost when soil temperatures are

warm. INSIDE: For northern climates, we recommend starting seeds indoors 4-6 weeks before last frost.

**Optimal Growing Conditions:** SOIL: Prefers light and well drained but will grow in almost any soil. WATER: Must be kept moist.

**EXPOSURE:** Full sun. **FERTILIZER:** Like all melons, gourds or cucumbers, bitter melon is a heavy feeder. An initial fertilization of bone meal (high in phosphorous-great for root development) is recommended. Fertilize lightly every 4 weeks after initial sowing with a water soluble fertilizer. Remember, though, not to overfertilize or you will get lots of foliage and not very many gourds.

**SPECIAL GROWING INSTRUCTIONS:** Remove the first set of flowers - this will increase your production and encourage a uniformly usable crop. Also, grow on trellis or fence; if that isn't possible, set gourds on straw or board.

> IF YOU ARE GROWING GOURDS IN THE GARDEN, separate from the cucumbers, melons, pumpkins, and squashes; they are very closely related and if they cross, the result can be something you don't really want. > Remove any poorly shaped or rotting fruit from the vine immediately.

**Special Sowing & Germination Instructions:** Soak seeds in water overnight or for 24

hours before sowing - they have a very hard seed coat. Be patient; seeds can take up to 3 weeks to germinate.

**Harvesting - How to & when to:** For culinary purposes, cut gourds from vine when they are between 4" - 6" long. For use as a sponge, gourds are ready to harvest when they turn brown, feel light, and rattle with loose seeds when shaken. In shorter season climates, harvest the gourds and dry them for about 2 weeks or until the skin hardens and they turn brown. In either case, then open the large end and shake out the seeds. Soak the gourd overnight or until the skin separates from the sponge. Remove the excess pulp and rinse in a 10% bleach solution. Allow to dry thoroughly.

### Quality You Can Grow With - Unconditional Guarantee

Since we garden with our own seed, we want only the best quality seed! Germination tests are performed on all our seed and we accept only the best quality available! If you have a problem with your seed, simply write us at the address on the back of our seed packet and we will be happy to help you out! Happy Gardening - Curtis Jones, President.



Date Seed  
Planted:

(Write In date)

Days to Maturity: 110

**Artist:** Donna Clements of Longmont, Colorado is a graduate of the School of Visual Arts, NYC. Her work includes set design, scenic art, murals, paintings, and graphic arts. Donna is an advanced master gardener. Hobbies include scuba, motorcycling, and Star Trek. "Live Long and Prosper!"

## **F** **R** **O** **S** **T**

### Your last day of frost...

The last day of frost (32 degrees or less) is defined as "the first day in spring on which there is less than a 50% chance a frost will occur." This information is crucial when planting a garden. To find out your last day of frost, call your local independent garden center or your county Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service. Also inquire about the average date of the first fall frost.