



What is a gourd?

These oddly shaped, hard skinned, fruits come from various plants in the Cucumber family. Their closest relatives are the melon, pumpkin, and squash. There are three main types of gourds.

The Cucurbita or ornamental gourds include the Crown of Thorns, pear, orange, egg, spoon, warties, and others that are indicative of their shape. These are all colorful gourds and are used in Holiday decorations. The vines produce large orange colored blossoms and they bloom during the day.

Lagenaria or hard shell gourds are usually but not always large gourds and the vines produce white blossoms during the night and early morning. The rind is tough, and when dried is often used for dippers, bushels, bottles, birdhouses, crafts, and much more.

The Luffas are unlike other gourds. The outer rind is easily removed and the interior is used commercially as sponges. The beautiful yellow flowered vines bloom in the day.

Gourd History

Gourds have been used by many societies in vast and diverse ways. Hawaiians alone have over forty uses for the bottle gourd. The gourd patch can provide everything to dish up dinner, from plates to cups. Baskets, bowls, and boxes were easy to craft and decorated as simple or as elaborate as the person wanted.

In the pyramids of ancient Egypt, pharaohs were buried with gourds filled with grain. On the other side of the globe, the Incas were buried with gourds full of corn. They also found gourd rattles buried with infants.

Indians in the Illinois River Valley were growing gourds over 7,000 years ago.

American pioneers carried seeds of bushel gourds given to them by the Indians, on the Oregon trail, in their covered wagons. Their dried gourds held and preserved fat after hog killing time.

Daniel Boone's father stored eggs in a gourd basket. Chinese workers wore gourd hats while building American railroads.

Gourds have been used for Peruvian earring fashions and Nigerian mothers use gourd hats to shade their babies heads.

Gourds are the basis of musical instruments such as rattles, banjos, sitars, marimbas, and drums.

Gourds Today

With the discovery and creation of pottery, metals, glass, and plastic most of the practical uses for gourds have disappeared through the ages. Millions of gourds are grown annually to which a small percent are still used on an every day basis. In America most of the gourds are used for decorations and crafting.

Most gourds are dry enough for crafting when the seeds rattle inside. Crafters and artisans subject their gourds to a multitude of techniques to reach their desired results. They may wood burn, stain, dye, carve, inlay, drill, paint, and weave on them to mention a few.

Some gourds inspire the crafter right off the vine. Penguin gourds are more than halfway to being penguin statues. Dinosaurs, swans, whales, and elephants may be found in the gourd patch. Holiday ornaments made from gourds range from Thanksgiving turkeys, Christmas angels and Santas, to permanent Easter eggs.

Both hardshell and ornamental gourds have two skins. For most projects, the thin outer skin must be scrubbed off (along with mold that has formed during the drying stage) before work begins. A short soaking in warm soapy water makes scrubbing easier but it also softens and weakens the shell. Watch thin shelled ornamentals carefully or they will break. A Chore Boy scrubber is one of the best tools to make scrubbing easier. Some people also add chlorine bleach to the scrub water or to a final rinse to kill the mold and preventing a possible return. Let scrubbed gourd dry over night and the next day it will be ready for your project.



**The South Carolina
Gourd Society**

MEMBERSHIP IN THE S. C. GOURD SOCIETY

For information regarding membership (\$12 annually) in the South Carolina Gourd Society, write to:

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Please visit us on the web!

scgourdsociety.com



Our Patches



The Palmetto Patch in Greenville was established so we can share our love of gourds. Our main purpose is

promoting growing of gourds, sharing the love of gourd art, and letting everyone know how to safely work with gourds.

We meet once a month. We alternate Thursdays and Saturdays. Our Thursday meetings are at the Lutheran Church, 2600 Wade Hampton Blvd., Greenville, 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM. Our Saturday meetings are at Creative Hands in Lyman, Hwy. 29 at 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM. Annual dues are \$10.00, the first meeting is free. Come join us! We readily share our talents and abilities and we have loads of fun.

Look on the web site for dates, projects, and directions. Our web site is:
www.orgsites.com/sc/palmettogourdpatch/index.html



The Cypress Gourd Patch is in Sumter. We meet monthly, the

first Tuesday, 9 AM to NOON, at The Shepherd's Center on Council Street. Following a brief business meeting, patch members spend the remaining time learning a new technique brought to the meeting by another member or guest artisans. Sometimes we choose to review a particularly difficult technique. So far, we have explored wax resist, colorants, vinegar graining, making lamps, Tenerife, pins & jewelry, and more.

Annual dues are \$10, the first meeting is free, except for any materials fee for the class. We welcome any new and experienced gourders! Join the fun!

For more information, please contact Betsey Sloan, BASKETSVT@aol.com or jjurecek@sc.rr.com or www.orgsites.com/sc/cypressgourdpatch/



The Capital City Gourd Patch is in Columbia. We meet at 1152 Lindler Drive, West Columbia.

The purpose of our group is to meet artisans and share gourd art interests. We see and use various tools, review inspiring books, teach and learn new skills and using new techniques in our projects. We discuss the SC Gourd Society and the American Gourd Society news and other recent gourdng events.

Join us! Bring your friends, enthusiasm, curiosity, decorated gourds, and tools and art books that motivate you! We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting! Our web site is: www.orgsites.com/sc/capitalcitygourds/