

CORONA-YOUR-OWN

Helping you to get organic growing despite the disruption
e-Newsletter 21 10 January 2021

Welcome

I have all appendages crossed that 2021 is going to be a better year than 2020.

Growing Squash - from Stuart

I have outlined below my experiences of growing squash over the last 5 years, both at home and on a larger scale at the 5 Acres CSA at Ryton.

There are several key points which have worked for me in growing good squash. The soil must have a large volume of rotted compost added, and this needs to be well incorporated into the soil to produce a good growing area. Also keep well-watered if dry after planting out and during initial period of growth. In both locations the growing area has been covered with a suitable mulch/covering. I have used landscape fabric with holes made in it for the squash plants to reach the soil (see photo of currently growing garlic and winter onions on same principle). This has several advantages - it suppress weeds, keeps soil moist and warm, and allows squash to grow on top of the covering. Watering is via planting holes, which I make by burning a hole through fabric with a blow torch. I have used the same covering for 4 years so far.



I tend to grow several squash varieties as some do better than others dependent on the year.

Varieties grown:



Crown Prince

Crown Prince a blue/grey round squash which has orange flesh and stores very well. Grows to good size, can produce 3 or more per plant and my favourite.

Uchiki Kuri a smaller orange squash, again with orange flesh, also stores well.



Uchiki Kuri

Turk's Turban a small yellow squash as above - again keeps well.

Kabocha a green Japanese variety (I have yet to eat one of these)

I like to have squash ready to plant out early/mid June after last frosts. Sow 2/3 weeks earlier, singly in 3 inch pots and plant out about 4/5 feet apart (in old money) as they will trail some considerable length. Do not stop any shoots - just let them go. I leave the plants in the ground until leaves start to die off to allow them to ripen and foliage to wither. Allow them to ripen on plant, then harvest squash with a sharp knife and leave 2/3 inches of stem on the squash - do not cut off level with the top. Store in a frost free area and they can last until April next year, eating them as year progresses. We use them baked whole, pureed in soups and steamed as vegetable, and also as a filler in tomato sauce/sugo with pasta dishes. A lot of the seeds tend to be F1 so saving is not really an option but there is a lot of organic seed available. Really worth trying if you have not grown them before.

Have a go this year!

Pumpkins and squash - from Leigh

I love growing pumpkins and squash and am always trying different varieties. Partly because there are so many out there to try and partly because I was still looking for that special one. This year I think I may have found it. Black Futsu is a small to medium size squash that starts out dark forest green (almost black) and slowly turns to a dull orange with a white bloom when fully ripe.

I prepare the planting site by digging a 2ft wide hole and chuck in a good amount of muck and homemade compost, squash are greedy plants. I always sow the seed, placing it on its side, in pots in the greenhouse from the middle of April. Harden them off the last week of May and plant out the first week of June.

As soon as the plants were planted out the weather went topsy-turvy and turned cool and windy. The plants didn't like that at all and sat there sulking for a good while. Finally, they decided they were going to start growing and fruit in late July, the ribbed fruit grew to about the size of a small football.

You are supposed to cut and bring them in before the first frosts. Cure for a couple weeks somewhere warm and then store in a cool room, where they will keep for ages. As mine took a while to fruit I had to cut some still at the green stage but they have still kept well; I just used the green ones first. The first one we tried was cut into slices, griddled and then roasted in the oven for 45 mins. Served on top of a thick homemade chilli tomato sauce - heaven on a plate?



Turk's Turban



Kabocha

I hand pollinated a few of the fruit and saved the seeds, so I hope they get used to our soil & location and do better this year when they go out in June? Although I will be trying a couple of new varieties in 2021 (I can't help myself), Oregon Homestead Sweetmeat & Lady Godiva for hull-less seeds, Black Futsu is on the list again this Summer!

Sorry if that's a bit of a long story but I really would recommend Black Futsu! Happy Growing

Question

Holly - from Chris

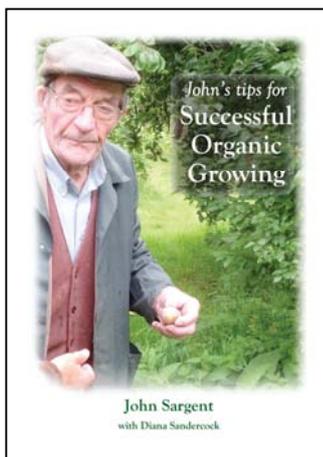
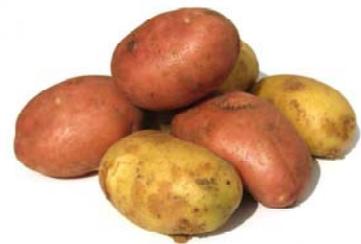
Do any members have any advice or handy hints please about how to grow holly from berries please. I'd like to have a go at this but have no idea how possible or difficult it might be. Many thanks.

DRINK-YOUR-OWN

My homemade raspberry and blackcurrant gin was amazing! (note past tense)

HEOG's Organic Potato Sale

A reminder that our on-line version of Potato Day is up and running and tubers are selling fast. Some varieties are over 50% sold and once gone there will be no more until next year! Last orders will be accepted on 5 February, but we expect some varieties to have sold out by then. You can pre-order yours now at <http://www.heog.org.uk/> where you will find full details about the varieties and how to order.



John's Tips for Successful Organic Growing

Copies of the new edition of John Sargent's book of tips for organic gardeners are now available to order from the website <http://www.heog.org.uk/>, price £7 including post and packing (or £5 if collected with seed potato order).

POSTSCRIPT

Feedback from our readers is important, so if you have ideas, news or tips you would like to share, please let us know.

If you have any questions related to organic growing which you think our members might be able to answer, let us know and we will try to include the questions and replies in our newsletters.

You can contact us at enews@heog.org.uk.

Gillian McGivern