

Zucchini

Cucurbita pepo



General Information

- Edible plant
- Sun Exposure: Full sun
- Water needs: High
- Temperature: Does best in warmer temperatures, and cannot tolerate cold. Make sure to plant when temperatures at night are above 60 °F.
- When to harvest: Harvest around 60 days after planting. Zucchini tend to grow at various rates, so look for color and size as well. At around 8 inches, and with a deep green color the fruit should be ready to pick.
- Harvest season: Late spring to summer

Planting Guide

- Planting Season: Mid-spring. The zucchini does not do well at all in cold temperatures, so wait to plant until it warms up. To be safe you should plant 1 week after the last frost date (you can look up the frost date online for the specific year).
- Location: Somewhere with full sun. Make sure soil is well-draining and rich. Try to protect the zucchini from wind as well, as strong winds can tear the leaves.
- Spacing: Plant zucchini at least 2 feet apart from each other.
- Soil and Fertilizer: Mix compost into the soil at the planting area, and ideally add a layer of mulch to the top of the soil to conserve moisture.

Care Guide

- **Irrigation:** Zucchini need a good amount of water to thrive. You will know to water the plants when the leaves begin to wilt. The plants should get at least 2 inches of water per week, with additional watering as needed (especially during dry spells).
- **Pruning:** Remove dead and wilted stems and weeds surrounding the plant to keep things tidy and healthy.
- **Additional Fertilizer:** You can continue to add a top layer of mulch to soil to keep it moist. Once you notice the plant's first bloom, you can also apply some fertilizer to boost growth. Once the plant begins fruiting, you can continue to occasionally apply fertilizer for increased production.
- **Pests:** Squash bugs are the most common zucchini pest in California. Squash bugs dig into the stem and feed on the sap, which weakens the plant and decreases production rates. You can protect the plants using row covers or fleece, but you should continue to check for eggs on the stems and scrape off any you find. These bugs are most active in the early summer, so keep a look out during this time.
- **Disease:** Powdery mildew is a common disease that haunts zucchini. This fungus usually appears late in the season, and is characterized by a white, powdery film coating both sides of the leaves. If you spaced your plants right, the fungus may grow. However, if you do see powdery mildew, don't worry too much, as the plant usually copes on its own. In severe cases, the leaf can get blocked of sunlight by the fungus, in which case it should be removed. One strategy to avoid the fungus altogether is by applying a milk solution to the leaves. Mix $\frac{1}{3}$ milk and $\frac{2}{3}$ water and spray zucchini leaves early on a summer day. Repeating this process every 2 weeks throughout the season should prevent powdery mildew from growing. Another zucchini disease is blossom-end rot. This is characterized by the bottom end of the fruit turning black or rotting, this issue is usually caused by uneven watering or low calcium, which is easily mendable through increased watering and applying calcium-rich fertilizer. Lastly, one simple thing to keep in mind is that zucchini fruit that touch the ground can begin to rot, so try keeping them propped up on tiles and such.

Sources:

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