

they need. Magnesium, boron, copper, and zinc are all most available in the 6 - 6.5 range and these nutrients contribute to building a hard, thick shell. In the raised beds I have added red lava rock (pH variable), green sand (also unpredictable pH) and humic acid (pH 6.0) to condition the soil and add trace minerals. Rather than manipulating pH levels in the beds I count on the extra fertility to make up for the higher pH levels in the soil. However, sending your garden soil sample to the Cooperative Extension is a good way to obtain a "customized" report that will supply information on correcting the pH, fertilizers and other amendments to use and rates of application. Be sure to list gourds as what you're growing to get a customized "recipe" for your gourd garden.

Bottomline. What do gourds need? Gourds need soil, water, sunshine, and room to spread out. Soil. Soil could be potting mix in a pot or grow bag. Water. You don't have to have a fancy drip system. Jim Story carried water from a nearby creek to water his gourds. Sun. A large pot on a sunny porch can become home for a gourd vine just as well as a garden in the back yard or a field at a farm. Space can be increased by taking advantage of vertical growing techniques. With a system of arbors to maximize our space usage, we grow a LOT of gourds on a tiny corner of our farm. Without the use of arbors, our gourd garden could easily fit on a good size city lot. I'd add though, neighbors might be less tolerant of the gourds that escape through the fence. 🍷

Tutorial: How to Make or Use a Flat Mold for a Gourd from Betty Finch

Materials

- 3/4" plywood (large enough to make two pieces the size of your mold)
- 4" long, round head, threaded metal screws and wing nuts
- Drill with appropriate size bit
- Mold, such as a ceramic cookie press

Steps

1. This mold was 4" square, so the boards were cut to create two that were each 4" x 8"
2. Stack Boards and drill holes in all 4 corners.
3. Use threaded screws and wing nuts to hold the plywood a few inches apart.



4. A ceramic cookie press was inserted between the plywood sheets to create the heart pattern on the gourd.
5. Place small blocks of wood or corks between the plywood pieces at the outside corners to hold the plywood apart; tighten the screws down to hold the spacers in place.
6. Choose a baby gourd small enough to be placed gently in the middle of the mold without damaging the gourd, small bruises will become big scars. Note if the volume of the mature gourd does not fit in the space of the mold it will form notches at the corners where it touches the threaded screw.

As the gourd grows it becomes pressed between the mold on one side and the wood on the other. The screws keep it constrained and thickness is controlled by the form.

- Do not remove the mold/press until the gourd plant has died and the stem is brown.
- Remove from form and allow gourd to dry as you do for all gourds
- Scrub clean with soap and water

Art

Here is the wall hanging Betty made with that molded gourd. She used a manipulated dipper as a frame. It was a late gourd so it was very thin and shriveled a bit on the ball end, but was sturdy enough to use for hanging. 🍷

