

Starting a Gourdpatch in Your Area

(ideas compiled by Sue Brown in Sarasota, Florida, 2002)

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Good luck and have fun!!!

This information was developed to help folks get Gourdpatches going in Florida, and to give ideas as to what organizers have done in the way of "getting going". It is not really hard to do ... if you know a few folks already interested in gourd, you have a potential group that will grow as the word spreads. The first couple of meetings take some time and effort to plan and carry off, but it is well worth it. Then when you get some input from the group as to future meeting ideas, you are off and running. Gourders are wonderful folks and love to share what they have done and know how to do. This information is intended to give you some ideas and get you started in organizing your efforts. Some folks love detail, others are a little looser, so do whatever works for you and your group. Above all have fun and look forward to making some wonderful new friends. Information below includes:

- [Starting a Gourdpatch in 10 easy steps](#)
- [Meeting ideas](#)
- [Sample meeting agendas](#)
- [Sample initial contact letter](#)
- [Sample promotional handout](#)
- [Gourd interest questionnaire](#)

A New Gourdpatch in Ten Easy Steps -- Suggestions by A.B. Amis 11/19/01

1) COMMIT - AND THEN MAKE IT HAPPEN

Select a regular periodic meeting time and location that will be convenient for YOU, because YOUR presence and dedication are going to be key until the new patch is more or less able to stand on its own feet. You can consider changing the time and location to accommodate your members' preferences later, if need be, after you have established a sizable and stable membership. Saturday mornings have worked well for us. Free meeting rooms are typically available at libraries, bookstores, craft stores, etc.- all you have to do is ask. You may be asked to sign some paperwork, agreeing to be personally responsible for seeing to it that the facility's policies are observed relative to clean-up, non-discrimination, liability for damage, etc.

Preferably, find one or two other individuals willing to work with you in getting the patch started, because misery loves company, and there will probably be some initial disappointments as people you contact profess interest, but then don't show up for meetings.

2) PUBLICIZE THE MEETINGS

Develop an initial mailing/telephone list of people in your area whom you think might be interested in participating in a gourdpatch, send them postcards or letters a few weeks in advance of a planned first meeting, and then maybe follow this up with phone reminders shortly before the meeting. But perhaps even more important than this contact list. work hard to get announcement of meetings in the "Weekly Calendar" section of your local newspaper. Perhaps meeting notices placed in craft stores, plant nurseries, etc. could prove effective too, although we've never tried that. Ask participants to bring their own gourds, supplies, and tools if they have them, but note in the publicity that gourds, supplies, and tools will be available at the meeting for those who can't bring their own.

Have name badge blanks and a sign-in sheet on a table near the door. Ask everyone who attends your meetings to place their names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses on the sign-in sheet, and then use these sheets as a basis for making lists of people to be notified with "reminders" about later meetings, etc. (These lists may also be useful in periodically letting your "host" facility know that their meeting rooms are being well used.)

3) ARRANGE TO HAVE GOURDS AVAILABLE AT ALL THE MEETINGS

The availability of gourds at the meetings is a strong incentive for newbies and hike-warm gourders to attend. Do some of your members, or prospective members, grow gourds that they would be willing to bring to the meetings for sale to other members? Will others perchance be traveling to gourd shows, or to other places where gourds can be bought in quantity? Any kinds of gourds will do fine initially - the members can fit crafting projects to whatever gourds are available to them, and only later, after the patch has grown to the point where specific, pre-planned workshop projects are the norm, should there be much concern about having the "right" kinds of gourds available.

4) ARRANGE TO HAVE SPECIALIZED GOURD TOOLS/SUPPLIES AT THE MEETINGS

You've probably seen it happen - the first time a person takes one of those mini-jigsaws in his hands and cuts a gourd; he's hooked, and can hardly sleep until he owns one! So try to have a jigsaw, wood burner, Dremel, your favorite gourd-cleaner-outer, etc. at the meetings. Paints of course, and maybe leather dyes as well - most people are probably familiar with paints and painting supplies, but the use of dyes is usually an interesting new idea to them. Pine needles, palm seed stems, philodendron sheaths, Krylon lacquer, etc. And Ginger Summit's books, too, of course.

5) HAVE A BRAG TABLE WHERE MEMBERS CAN DISPLAY CURRENT PROJECTS

Try to bring work yourself illustrating a variety of Grafting techniques, and encourage everyone to bring their latest creations - no matter how amateurish. Brag on all efforts, and offer encouragement.

6) DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT ORGANIZED PROGRAMS AT FIRST

For the first few meetings, it should be enough just to get together and talk gourds and do "show and tell" and maybe cobble up some simple project on the spot based on whatever gourds and tools are at hand - maybe nothing more than having the attendees try out the various Grafting techniques on gourd scraps. Just publicize the meeting as "Fun With Gourds" or something non-committal like that. There are also a few hours of homemade FGS gourd videos available for showing, by way of introducing members to what a gourd show is, and who some of their fellow FGS members are.

7) HAVE FGS LITERATURE AVAILABLE AT MEETINGS. AND SIGN UP MEMBERS

FGS Membership Brochures, "Fact Sheets for Florida Gourders", "How We Grow Gourds in Florida", copies of past Gourdvine newsletters, etc. are available by contacting A.B. Amis. Make it easy for new members to join FGS/AGS by assisting them in filling out the membership coupon on the FGS brochure and then YOU forward it, along with their membership dues, to Treasurer Kelly Lewis.

8) SEEK OPPORTUNITIES FOR PATCH "OUTSIDE" ACTIVITIES

Be alert to opportunities for doing gourd programs for local Garden Clubs, educational or artistic gourd exhibits in library showcase windows, etc. - anything to increase local public awareness of our gourd hobby.

9) SUBMIT MONTHLY PATCH REPORTS FOR THE "GOURD VINE"

Brag on members and member accomplishments - everyone likes recognition!

10) FISCAL MATTERS

As things presently stand, gourdpatches enjoy no "official" status insofar as the FGS or AGS Constitution and By-Laws are concerned, and it's probably better that it stay that way so local patches can make up and follow whatever rules and procedures they find convenient for themselves. However, it is to the advantage of FGS that patches be formed, as this has good potential for bringing in new members and generally strengthening the society through activities of the patches, so a case could probably be made for FGS providing some "seed money", either as a loan or as an outright grant, for helping patches cover some startup expenses like mailings and possibly acquisition of an inventory of patch-owned gourds if need be. This is a matter that I am now discussing with your Executive Board.

SOME GOURDPATCH MEETING IDEAS:

(COURTESY OF THE MARION CO, FL GOURDPATCH)

- Tool clinic (woodburning, mini jigsaw, dremel, etc)
- Cutting gourds with a dremel tool
- Patching gourds
- Painted a penguin gourd
- Laying out and woodburning an egg gourd and chip carving demonstration
- Pine needle weaving on a gourd
- Decoupage fabric and photos on a gourd
- Pen and ink (done on paper)
- Visit to a new gourd farm
- Dream catchers on a gourd
- Philodendron sheaves on a gourd bowl top
- Gourd bird house
- Realistic apple gourd painting
- Rooster on a gourd

- Crackling on a gourd without crackle medium
 - Gourd snowman
 - Gourd mask
 - Relief carving on a gourd
 - One stroking on a gourd... not a worksheet.
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(COURTESY OF THE SARASOTA GOURDPATCH, our first 8 meetings comprised of the following:)

- Tool Clinic.....initial introduction to mini jigsaw, carving tools, dremels,
- woodburners, etc
- Pine needle coiled tops on prepared gourd bowls
- Tenerife design on prepared gourd bowl
- Chicken created using Paper Clay
- Gourd purses using Canteen gourds
- Pen and Ink on a preped gourd
- Pyrography on a gourd bowl
- Rain stick using prepared snake gourds

****Encourage all attendees to bring finished gourds for a "show and tell" table each time. The sharing and socializing this creates is very important. (For all of our meetings so far we have had members act as the "teacher" in a technique they are comfortable/proficient with...use the talents you have :) IDEAS ARE ENDLESS...AT LEAST WE HOPE SO :)

SAMPLE GOURDPATCH MEETING AGENDA (Sarasota, first meeting)

*****have everyone sign in on a prepared sheet, with name, address, phone, email addy

*****items to bring along: gourds, books, tools, sign-in materials, FGS materials, gourd samples, crafting materials

- meet and greet
 - how we got started, FGS related, and FGS Materials.Benefits of membership.
 - Introductions.....name, town, how each first got into gourds,
 - main design technique.
 - Florida Gourd Show, classes; gourd, tool and embellishment,suppliers, judged competition, decorated gourds for sale,
 - dinner/meeting for FGS (information avail on front table, can watch video later on if desired)
 - future meeting times, Feb and Mar 16 dates booked at Library. will be a bit more open to the public, publicity help for future.....any ideas as to whom to let know of our group????.....WEEKDAYS VS SATURDAY????????? Donations of small amt will be needed.
 - books of interest..... some on front table.
 - Hand outs available.....if only one or two, leave. Plenty of "Gourd vines" available....FGS newsletter
 - internet sites of interest.....handout available (go over)
 - Gourd Growing and cleaning.....handouts.....any ??
 - Share info on tools for cleaning and crafting.....After our "program time" various tools will be available to try out if desired.
 - Technique questionnaire..... have attendees fill out, name on.
 - discuss future program ideas..... ask for ideas. Possibilities might include dreamcatcher (weaving) or lidded bowl (cutting)
 - need help in running this patch:
 - set up and cleanup at meetings
 - phone and or mailings/emails to stay in touch
 - publicity.....newspapers, contacting groups about our meetings
 - getting gourds/supplies for programs
 - program committee
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SAMPLE GOURDPATCH MEETING AGENDA (Sarasota, second meeting)

1. Greeting and welcome new members. BRING FRIENDS. MAKE newcomers welcome....we're all on the reception committee. (GROUP MISSIONS:TO SHARE AND LEARN ABOUT DIFFERENT GOURDING TECHNIQUES.)
2. meeting sign in table.....donation, name tags, hand outs if desired, dues for FGS will accept and mail in registration, check, give out welcome packet if on hand. Others willing to help man the table at future meetings..... \$1 donation to go towards mailings, paper.....whatever we as a group need in future.
 - 2a.....future meetings....like today...open and set-up 9-9:30, quick meeting at 9: 30, demo/workshop starting at 9:45 to 12 or so. BRING GOURDS, BOOKS, ANYTHING ELSE TO SHARE INFO WITH OTHERS.
 - 2b. FLORIDA GOURD SOCIETY/ SHOW; Encourage membership, participate in next year's show.....have a booth to sell our items, make cash for out patch???? SHOW.... .NEXT weekend.....how many going?????? Anyone need to hear about it??? Info at the sign up desk...
 - 2c. NOTEBOOK/ BINDER for info and handouts.....
3. ITEMS FOR SALE table what's available...seeds, packets, pine needles, gourds if possible, philo sheaths..... bring items in for working on gourds if desired. Some proceeds to go directly to Patch treasury.
4. FUTURE MEETING DATES...3rd Saturday: March 16 , April 20, May 18, June 15
5. PROGRAM UPCOMING.... introduce Ronda Smally who's willing to head up this committee....others interested in participating in this....and in heading a program? NEXT MONTHS PROGRAM:_____
6. RESULTS OF SURVEY OF INTERESTS:
 - 6b. videos to run of Amis' on TV, Florida Gourd show of past, Lynette Jennings program, Florida gal: Mindy Haskins
7. LISTING OF MEMBERS AVAILABLE.....WILL BE UPDATED REGULARLY. Let us know if your listing is incorrect. Let us know if you don't want your information listed.
8. HELP CLEAN UP the meeting room and return it to how we found it:)

Sample Initial Contact Letter

January 9, 2002

Dear fellow Gourders,

I have talked with or learned of you within the last year in regards to your interest in Gourds and Gourding. "Somehow" I became responsible for trying to get a gourd group, known as a GOURDPATCH going here in the Sarasota area. Now that the holidays are over, perhaps we can get in gear. So I have taken the bull by the horns and scheduled an initial meeting, just one week from now. I apologize for the short notice!!!

The purpose of this first meeting is to:

- get to meet other folks in the area with similar interests
- show the others some of the gourds you have crafted, and see what others have done.
- See gourding tools and books helpful in our craft (bring any along you might have)
- get ideas as to what we'd like to do as a group... demonstrations you'd like to see; group projects we could do in a meeting time (mask, decorative rim, learn foiling, etc.)
- To learn more about the Florida Gourd Society and the upcoming Florida Gourd Show in Belleview (Feb 22-24) (possibly pre -order special types of gourds those of us going could procure)

- See a video of the past Florida Gourd Show and/or a video on making a gourd mask

This meeting will be as successful as we make it!! So bring enthusiasm, curiosity, decorated gourds, gourd or other art books you find motivational.

PLEASE CALL ME.... and let me know you can come or not, or if another time would be more suitable for you in the future. We're just starting from scratch, so we can do whatever we decide works!
 spread the word-----bring a friend

NAME PHONE NUMBER EMAIL ADDY

Sample Promotional Handout (wherever you find interested folks: craft fairs, county fairs, garden clubs, craft stores)

SARASOTA GOURDPATCH

LOOKING FOR A NEW HOBBY OR CRAFT ?

A NEW GROUP HAS FORMED IN OUR AREA TO SHARE THE GOURDGLOW !!

VISITORS, NEWBIES AND CURIOUS WELCOME. NO EXPERIENCE NOR TALENT NEEDED!

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**Who:** Men and women looking for a new hobby.  
**What:**Area GOURD crafters meet to share their current projects and learn new crafting techniques.  
 (such as coiling, carving, pyroengraving (woodburning), weaving, painting, etc.....the list of possibilities is endless:)

**Where:**Monthly meetings at new ((LOCATION))  
**When:**((Day of the month and times))  
**What to do:** Contact \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

(associated with the Florida Gourd Society)

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| GOURD INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE |               | Name _____ |           |
|------------------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|
| Techniques:                  | Want to learn | Have done  | Mainly do |
| Painting                     |               |            |           |
| Collage/decoupage            |               |            |           |
| Pyrography                   |               |            |           |
| Inks/stains                  |               |            |           |
| Chip carving                 |               |            |           |
| Stenciling                   |               |            |           |
| Coiled tops                  |               |            |           |

|                      |  |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Lattice cutting      |  |  |  |
| Bird house           |  |  |  |
| Wrapping/coiling     |  |  |  |
| Masks                |  |  |  |
| Couching             |  |  |  |
| Butterfly home       |  |  |  |
| Twining              |  |  |  |
| Mini gourds          |  |  |  |
| Slit weaving         |  |  |  |
| Tree ornaments       |  |  |  |
| Netting/beading      |  |  |  |
| Figures/dolls        |  |  |  |
| Bases and stands     |  |  |  |
| Animal creations     |  |  |  |
| Rainsticks           |  |  |  |
| Lidded bowl          |  |  |  |
| Musican Instruments  |  |  |  |
| Lacing               |  |  |  |
| Bowls                |  |  |  |
| Geometric designs    |  |  |  |
| Metallics            |  |  |  |
| Oil paints           |  |  |  |
| Pastels              |  |  |  |
| Textured paints      |  |  |  |
| Paint pens/ink pens  |  |  |  |
| Metallic powders     |  |  |  |
| Gold leaf            |  |  |  |
| Inlay                |  |  |  |
| Philodendron sheaths |  |  |  |
| Knotless netting     |  |  |  |
| Tennerife            |  |  |  |
| Gourd Jewelry        |  |  |  |

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