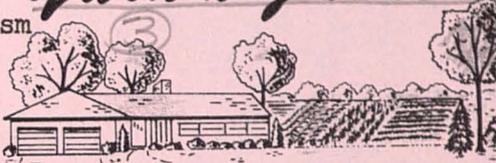


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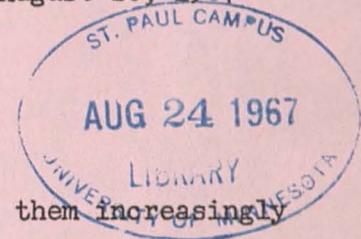
Yard 'n' Garden



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GOURDS

The interesting colors and shapes of gourds have made them increasingly popular for home decoration.

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It's generally a good idea to leave gourds on the vine until after a light frost. Cut off mature fruits, leaving stems attached. You can usually detect maturity by a browning and drying of the stem. Often the fingernail test is used to determine hardness of the skin. However, be cautious about using this test; taking off a bit of the skin with the fingernail may blemish an underripe gourd and destroy its future ornamental value.

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After you've harvested the fruits, wash them in soapy water and rinse in clean water to which you've added a household disinfectant. This disinfectant will help control organisms that cling to the shell.

Now spread the gourds out on several layers of newspaper in a warm, dry place to allow evaporation of the surface moisture, to let the skin harden and to set the color. This process will take about a week. During that time rotate the fruits often so they will dry uniformly.

The next step is to wipe the gourds clean, then place them in a warm, dry but dark room to cure for three or four more weeks.

* * *

After the gourds are cured, you may want to give them a coat of wax, shellac or varnish. Several applications of water-base wax, each followed by a brushing with a soft cloth, will accentuate the natural color and produce a slight gloss. The waxing is an inexpensive and quick treatment.

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