

Gourds

Gourds have been growing for thousands of years and were used by different cultures throughout the world, including Native Americans. Gourds were used for storage containers, ornaments, rattles, musical instruments and utensils.

Gourds grow on a vine like a watermelon and are related to the melon, squash, pumpkin and cucumber family. They like a warm well-drained soil to grow and spread out. They are planted after the last frost has past, and their growing season lasts from 100-180 days.

Native Americans used the gourds for utensils, including rattles in their dances or by medicine men. Gourd rinds, seeds, utensils and ornaments have been found in the mound builders and cliff dwellers. They also hung clusters of gourds on poles around their corn patches to serve as homes for insect eating birds.

Old time farm houses were known for their arbors with gourd vines growing on them. Long before residents had city water, water was dipped from a well. There was an oak bucket and beside the bucket there was a gourd dipper from which a cool drink of water on a hot summer day tasted cool and refreshing. In the South today, you can still find people growing gourds for dippers, bowls, spoons, nest eggs, darning balls, salt and pepper shakers, children's rattles and bird houses.

The gourd has grown into a business that includes instructions on how to grow, dry, cure, carve, paint, decorate and burn designs on or into the gourds. People use these techniques by making gourds into works of art. These works of art can be found at many art and craft shows. The Gourd capital is in Wren, Georgia and there is a Gourd Museum within the "Gourd Place" in Sautee, Georgia five miles from Helen, Georgia.