

Drying Gourds

Lancaster County

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[318]

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Harvest gourds when the vine and stem dries and begins to turn brown. Be sure to complete your harvest before the first hard frost. Immature gourds will not cure correctly, so only harvest mature fruit.

After harvest, wash the fruit in a

mild bleach solution and dry off with a soft cloth. Discard any bruised, diseased or damaged fruit. To dry, place gourds on slatted trays or chicken wire fencing. Make sure they do not touch each other and are located in a warm, dry well ventilated location.

Curing can take one to six months, depending on the type of gourds. The outer skin hardens in one or two weeks, while the internal dry-

ing takes at least an additional month. Poke a small hole in the blossom end of the gourd to quicken internal drying. Occasionally turn the fruits, checking for uneven drying or soft spots. When you shake the gourd and hear the seeds rattling, it is cured and ready for a coat of paint or varnish, if desired.