

Growing Luffa Gourds at Home

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What are Luffa Gourds?

- AKA vegetable sponges, sponge gourds, dishrag gourds
- *Luff* – Arabic name for the plant
- Native to south and southeast Asia
- 2 types:
 - *Luffa acutangula* (angled luffa)
 - *L. aegyptica* (smooth luffa)
- Leaves resemble cucumbers
- Soft, fibrous interior
- Immature gourds can be eaten as a summer squash
- During WWII, used in surgical operations, as filter material in steam and diesel engines, and in Army helmet linings
- <http://www.luffa.info/index.htm>



Growing Luffas



- Takes about 130-140 days – long growing season
- Vigorous vines – need support
 - Can grow up into trees if you don't watch it
- Planted in late spring after threat of frost – no tolerance for cold
- Warm soil
- Full sun
- Plants should be 4-5 ft apart in the row
- Rows should be 6 to 9 feet apart
- NEEDS PLENTY OF SPACE





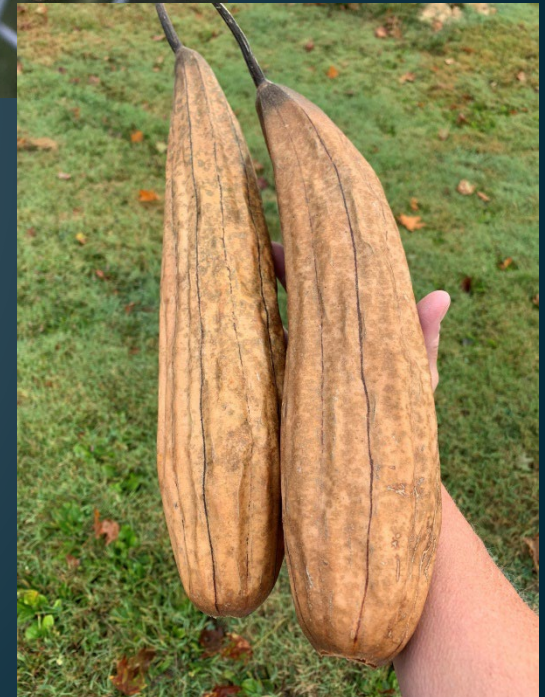
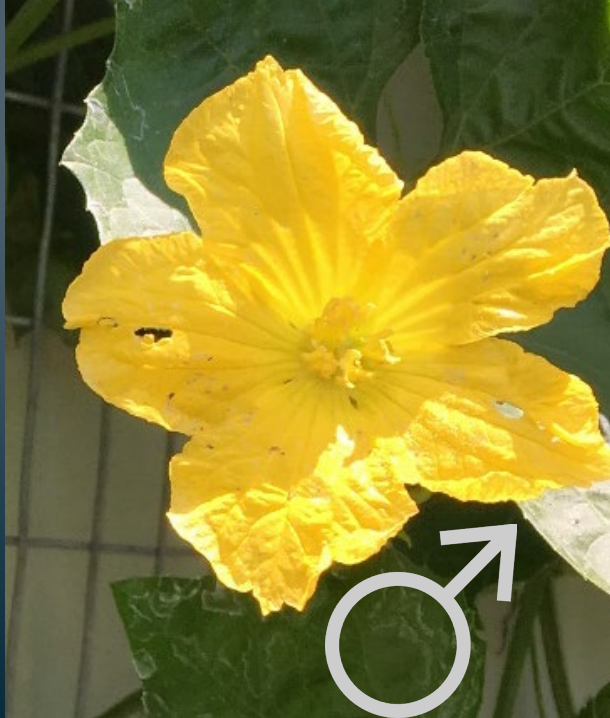
Growing Luffas

- Seeds germinate in about 4-7 days indoors (pre-soak for 24hrs)
 - Up to 3 weeks if cold or hard
- Can start seeds indoors 4 to 6 weeks before planting outside
- Luffas like organic matter
 - Plant a green manure (like winter rye or wheat) and till into garden area
 - Spread a layer of rotted manure or compost in the fall
- pH 6.5
- P, K, Mg, Ca
 - Make sure all at adequate levels



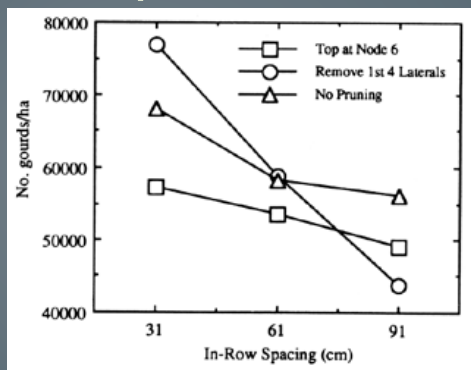
Green Manure Cover
Crops - Winter Rye





Growing Luffas

- Pollinated by bees – don't use insecticides when plants are in bloom
- Pinch off first 3 to 4 laterals to increase yields



- Expect about 10-20 luffas per plant
- Trellis needed
 - Helps with disease issues
- May grow up to an inch a day
- Fruit – up to 2' long



Luffa growth starting

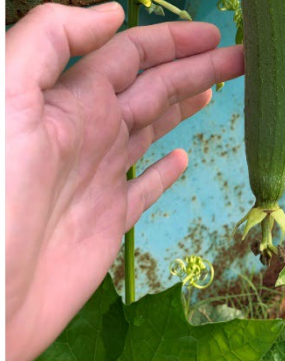
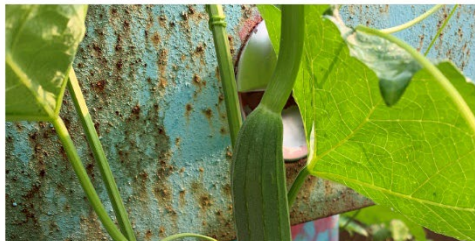
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Day 1 - 7.5 cm long, 4cm circum

Day 2 - 9.5cm, 5.5 cm circum

Day 3 - 12.2cm, 6.6 cm circumference

Day 4 - 15cm long, 8.1cm circumference



Day 5 - 17.7cm long, 9.6cm

Day 6 (Aug 2) - 20cm long, 11.8cm circumference

Day 14 - 35.2cm long, 21.3cm circumference



Day 15 - 36.1cm long, 22.1cm circumference

Day 16 - 37.4cm long, 23 cm circumference

Day 17 - 37.4cm long, 23.2 cm circumference



Day 8 - 24.5 cm, 14cm circumference



Day 9 - 24.5 cm, 14 cm circumference
Day 10 - 26.5 cm, 16.4 cm circumference
Day 11 - 28.5 cm, 17.8 cm circumference



Day 22 - 38.5cm long, 24.8 cm circumference



Day 23 - 38.5cm, 24.5cm circumference

Day 24 - same

Day 25 - same

Day 26 - same

Day 27 (Aug 23) - same

Day 28 - same

Day 11 - 30.5cm, 17.8cm



Day 12 - 30.5 cm, 18.8 cm circumference
Day 13 - 32.5 cm, 20 cm circumference
Day 14 - 34.5 cm long, 21.3cm circumference



Growing Luffas

- Can be container-grown
- Fertilization
 - Go easy on the nitrogen
- Irrigation
 - Very beneficial, soaker hose
- Diseases
 - Trellis them up
 - Only water at base



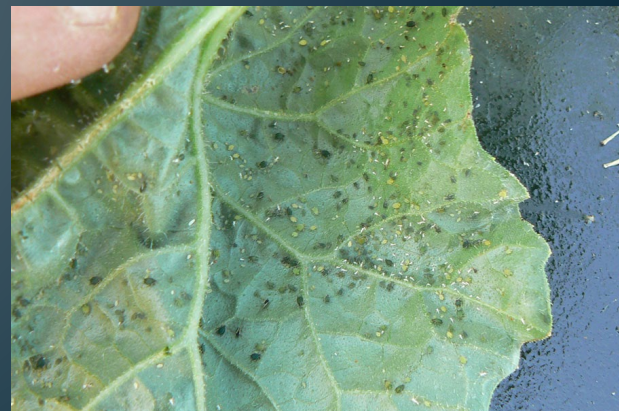
Growing Luffas

- Diseases
 - Trellis them up
 - Only water at base
 - Damping off (seedlings)
 - Anthracnose
 - Powdery mildew
 - Downy mildew
 - Bacterial wilt
 - Viruses



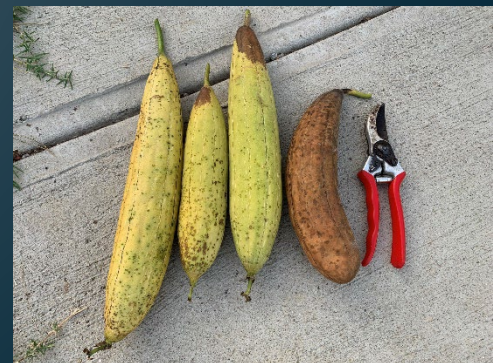
Growing Luffas

- Insects
 - Cucumber beetles
 - Squash bugs
 - Squash vine borer
 - Aphids



Harvesting Luffas

- Leave fruit on plant until the stem is completely dry & turning brown on both ends
 - After first frost, harvest all of reasonable ripeness
- Ripe gourds:
 - Cut off flower end (it'll fall off)
 - Shake seeds out
 - Remove skin
 - If brown, soak for a few minutes and remove
 - If not completely brown, bang on ground or table to loosen skin from fiber, then peel



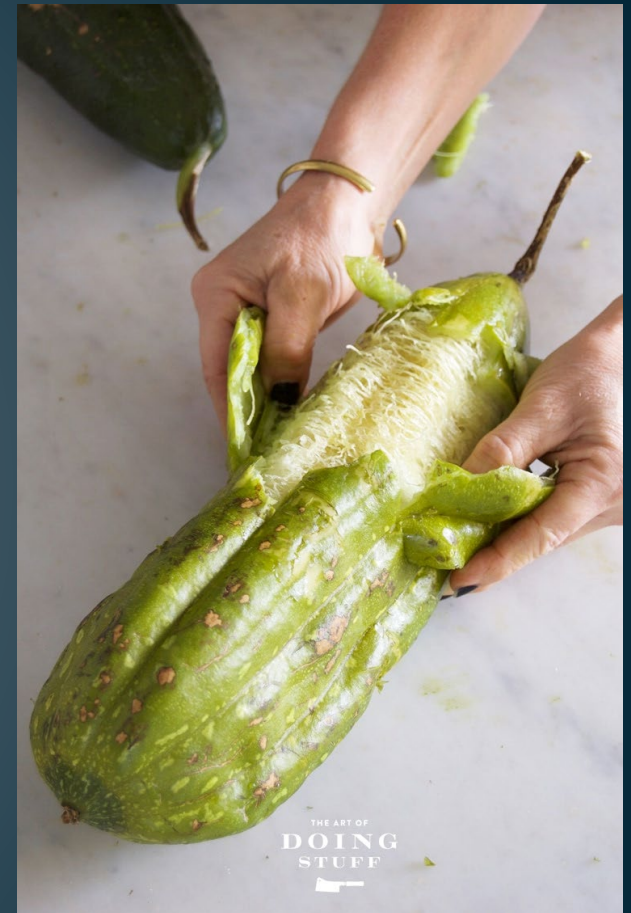
Harvesting Luffas

- Green gourds:
 - Bang gourd hard on table or on ground to loosen skin
 - Remove skin immediately
 - Seeds harder to remove
 - Rinse fiber (slimy)

- Dry in sun

OR

- Throw in hot water cycle of washing machine with a little soap and bleach; allow to dry









Luffa Uses









Pulaski County Horticulture



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YouTube Pulaski County Horticulture

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