



How To Grow Zucchini In Your Vegetable Garden

A healthy zucchini plant (also called a summer squash) in your organic vegetable garden is a beautiful and productive vegetable to grow in your home garden. This article teaches you how to grow your own great tasting zucchini with organic methods.

Nov. 6, 2009 - [PRLog](#) -- A healthy zucchini plant (also called summer squash) in your organic vegetable garden is such a beautiful and productive vegetable to grow. The normal very bland flavour of a supermarket zucchini seems like distant memory when you eat a home grown zucchini. Ours taste so good that we often eat them raw. Our organic gardening article this week teaches you how to grow your own great tasting zucchini. You can also find a lot of additional information on zucchini on our web site paid at www.cityfoodgrowers.com.

Step 1. Prepare your soil

Zucchini prefer a fertile, sandy loam soil with a ph range of 6.0-7.5. Zucchini like plenty of organic matter in the soil mostly around where you plant. Its very important that the soil should absorb and retain water effectively and drain well, as zucchini is a water hungry plant when fruiting. They are also very subject to mould so they need good water levels, but not so much to water-log them.

To prepare the bed, loosen the soil to 6-8 inches (15-18cm) depth. Break up any large clods in the soil and avoid walking on it because this will create hard packed soil. Studies in the USA have shown that hard packed soil can reduced zucchini yield by up to 50%. In planning your soil area for zucchini, allow plenty of space between plants and then concentrate your organic matter in the soil right where you intend to put each zucchini plant. Organic matter such as very well rotted manure, compost, leaf mould (not eucalypt) can be used. Make sure you do this preparation up to two weeks before planting. If its hot, cover your soil with mulch when ready and ensure its very moist before covering.

Step 2. Choose your plants

A healthy zucchini plant will keep cropping over a long period of time during the warm part of the year, so you do not need to put in too many plants to satisfy a family. Allow about a half metre (20 inches) diameter circle around each plant as they take up quite a bit space.

There are many varieties of zucchini to choose from and its important you choose varieties suitable for your taste preference. Varieties are listed on our web site at www.cityfoodgrowers.com.

Zucchini is a bee pollinated plant so encourage a healthy bee population in your garden. You can do nature's work if the bees are not doing theirs by hand pollinating the plants. About six weeks after germination, the male flowers will appear and will usually outnumber the females. The males are narrow and straight and the females are smaller and have a tiny fruit at their base. To hand pollinate, pluck a male flower, tear off the petals and swish the pollen laden end over the female flower.

Step 3. Follow correct planting methods

Zucchini is a warm season crop needing a full sun position with up to 8 hours of sunlight per day. They are very subject to frost at either end of the planting season. If you want early or late crops then make sure you protect the plants from extreme cold. Members of our web site at www.cityfoodgrowers.com can use our localised planting to find out ideal planting months and extreme cold months for growing zucchini for any location in Australia, USA and New Zealand.

Its best to plant zucchini seeds directly into your garden. The seeds are quite large and easy to handle so planting depth should be at least 1.5 times the diameter of the seed. Make sure you plant the seeds or seedlings in your garden bed in a large ball of compost.

Zucchini is not a plant to grow on climbing frames, so expect it to take up a lot of space in your garden. You can grow it in pots, but ensure its a big pot.

Do not keep growing zucchini in the same bed each season, as this will deplete the soil and increase the potential for soil borne diseases and pests that love zucchini, especially mould spores. It's good to have zucchini after flowering crops and there are many companions and beneficial flowers for zucchini to assist with pest and disease resistance, as well as enhancing fertility. On our web site at www.cityfoodgrowers.com, you can easily access crop rotation and beneficial flower information on zucchini.

Step 4. Use these growing guidelines

Always keep the soil around your young zucchini plant moist. Feed the plant regularly with liquid fertiliser (such as seaweed and fish emulsion or compost teas), especially if you have very hot conditions and your soil humus levels are not optimum.

The water levels required by zucchini changes greatly over their duration. When they reach fruiting stage, the water levels should be more than double of the pre-fruiting stage, otherwise the fruits will go yellow and then dark brown at the ends. This is a sure sign of not enough water when its needed.

In the warm season, mulch the soil around the base of the plants to hold in soil moisture.

Step 5. Control for pests and diseases

Maintaining a healthy soil is always the best protection against pests and diseases, so this is rule number one. Our web site at www.cityfoodgrowers.com has extensive instructional content on organic and biodynamic soil fertility practices for your vegetable and herb garden.

With zucchini, mould is often a problem where moisture levels are too high. You can minimise this problem by not watering on the leaves, not creating waterlogged roots, keeping mulch away from the base of the plant, not using mulch which has mould in it, such as spoiled lucern and not planting other curcubits such as melons too close. When mould strikes, make sure you pick off the leaves and remove them from your garden and spray the plant with a diluted milk mixture or equisetum concentrate.

A common visitor to zucchini is the squash vine borer. They cause the plant wilt and eventually die. Extensive information on organic treatment of zucchini diseases and pests is provided on our web site at www.cityfoodgrowers.com as well as rotation, companion planting and beneficial flower information.

Peter Kearney - www.cityfoodgrowers.com

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Cityfood Growers provides home gardeners with easy access online to localised knowledge on growing their own food with organic gardening methods. Gardening workshops, urban agriculture consulting and food gardening content for schools also provided.

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