

TAHITIAN BUTTERNUT

Butternut

Cucurbita moschata

Cucurbitaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Origin

This winter squash has been cultivated in tropical and subtropical areas of the Americas since Pre-Colombian times. Evidence of its use has been found in archeological diggings. It is a very old variety not often available through seed companies.

Uses

The Tahitian Butternut squash is an especially good vegetable for storage. Its flesh becomes sweeter as it is stored in a cool, dark place. It can be cooked like other sweet squashes.

Cultivation

Three to four seeds should be planted up to 1 in deep, on a slightly raised mound with about 6 ft between mounds. Vines will grow along the ground, rooting at nodes, growing best in soils high in organic matter. Fruits may weigh up to 40? in a long, warm growing season so trellises are not recommended unless very sturdy. Fruit is curved with a bulbous end and covered with skin that is buff-colored, smooth and hard. Older fruiting branches may die off but younger ones will support growth. Honeybees are attracted to the flowers and along with bumblebees are the most successful pollinators.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Harvest the Tahitian Butternut squash when a buff tan color has spread uniformly from blossom end to stem. Cross pollination with other varieties is common. Pollinating bees will mix different squash pollens as they fly approximately ½ mile in all directions from their hive to gather nectar. For a harvest of pure seed, different varieties should not be planted closer than 0.8 km (1/2 mile). Choose a healthy plant and let only one squash grow until the vine frosts or dies. Store the squash for a time to further mature the seeds. Scoop out the seeds, separate from pulp, wash, dry for 2 weeks in open air, and store in airtight container. Seeds can be viable for up to 5 years.

Pests and Diseases

Squash vine borer causes the whole plant to wilt and die. To lessen the damage, cover the stems with a small amount of soil so that the vines form roots at many nodules. Grey and striped beetles chew leaves and may carry other diseases.

Cooking and Nutrition

Hard winter squashes contain much more vitamin A than paler-fleshed summer varieties. Very versatile as food for human, they may be roasted whole (with a few holes punched through the skin), boiled, fried, mashed, steamed, cut into strips and dried for grinding into flour. It can be used in pies and breads. Immature squash may be cooked and eaten whole.