

Tips For Growing Zucchini

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Fresh Zucchini

Zucchini seems to be the rage for healthy eating these days, as a kid I don't even remember hearing about Zucchini much less eating it. Zucchini is a summer squash along with Acorn Squash, Spaghetti Squash & Butternut Squash. I have grown

Zucchini for the past 5 years, I want to share a few "Tips For Growing Zucchini."

- Let's start with planting it, I live in Zone 3/4, I am kind of in the edge of Zone 3 and so I can use Zone 4 as a growing time line. What is important to planting Zucchini? I plant mine from seed, but you can buy your plants at a greenhouse. I have found growing them from seed has worked well for me. This year I planted my seeds the very end of May, the soil needs to be at least 60 degrees. Some will say you need to start your seeds indoors 4-6 weeks prior to planting outside, but I planted my seeds directly into the soil and they are growing fine. I plant my seeds in mounds about 18" around and 4 seeds in each mound, normally I have ended up harvesting many more Zucchini then I really could use, so depending on how many Zucchini you want to end up with is how many mounds and seeds or seedlings (if you choose that way) you plant.

- **Zucchini Plant Needs: Fertile Soil, Sunlight and Water.**

Soil: Zucchini prefer a soil environment with a pH between 6 and 7.5, you can purchase a test kit to test your pH levels, and then you can amend your soil for the best growing conditions. Mounds do work well for the fact that they get good drainage. Also mulching your plants will help with the growth of your plants by holding moisture. If you don't have good draining soil adding sand will help.

Sunlight: Zucchini plants need 6-10 hours of sunlight per day, they thrive in an area that gets plenty of sunlight and with room to spread out.

Watering: Moist soil but not soggy soil. Making sure your zucchini get enough water, they need at least 2" of water a week, if the rainfall is lacking then manually water your plants. Frequent and consistent watering is recommended. Water most diligently when fruits form and throughout their growth period.

Maintaining your Zucchini Plants: Maintenance & Plant Growth.

Zucchini are pretty much a low maintenance plant, but any plant likes some special attention, so giving zucchini plants the nutrients it needs is very important. After harvest begins, fertilize occasionally for vigorous growth and lots of fruits.

Troubles with your Zucchini Plants.

Blossom End Rot has been my biggest headache with my Zucchini plants for the past 2 years, but I have found solutions to the problem. What is Blossom End Rot? Blossom End Rot on squash at the onset as a small bruise on the blossom end of the fruit, gradually softening and darkening in color until it eventually rots. It is caused by a lack of calcium deficiency, the lack of calcium in the soil is brought about by a number of factors including extreme soil moisture fluxes, over fertilization, or root damage usually caused by cultivation, so be careful when hoeing or tilling around plants.

Preventing Blossom End Rot.

Test your soil prior to planting to see if it has enough calcium, local extension offices can test your soil or use the store bought soil test kits. Also, maintain consistent

irrigation and keep the soil evenly moist. Mulch the plants to aid in water retention with organic mulch, like straw, or inorganic mulch, like black plastic. Zucchini plants do not need high amounts of nitrogen, which can result in lush, healthy foliage and little to no fruit. Excess nitrogen also causes blossom end rot on zucchini squash, as it blocks the absorption of calcium. Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers and ammonia fertilizers (such as fresh manure). Now the fresh manure is an interesting fact that I was not aware of, I had had fresh manure put on my garden the pass 2 years and that might be the cause of my problems with blossom end rot.



Zucchini's after being treated for Blossom End Rot

Treatment for Blossom End Rot.

If you are seeing the signs of blossom end rot you can improve your soil by adding calcium, the calcium needs to go directly to the roots so avoid a foliar spray. Calcium carbonate tablets, or anti-acid tablets like Tums, can be inserted at the base of the plant. They will then dissolve and within a few hours, calcium will be available to the plant. I have actually used the anti-acid tablets, they do work, I have smashed them up and added them to a gallon of water along with a cup of milk and I have also just pushed them down into the soil around the roots, it has been a very effective cure

Happy Zucchini planting and harvesting, I hope
"Tips For Growing Zucchini" was helpful to
you!!

One of my favorite recipes using Zucchini:
<https://www.mykitchenescapades.com/zucchini-recipe/>

Container Zucchini Planting:
<http://www.hometalk.com/3400506/5-best-container-vegetables-for-beginning-gardeners>

Preserving Zucchini:
<http://growagoodlife.com/preserve-zucchini/>