

## Cultural Details: Courgettes & Marrows

VHT012

Courgettes and Marrows are essentially the same vegetable harvested at different stages of maturity. Courgettes are the smaller immature fruits with Marrows the large ripe fruit version. However specific courgette varieties have now been bred to be at their best when small, with better taste and texture. Leaving some fruits to swell to become marrows is a good way to get both vegetable from a single plant. Also available are varieties bred to specifically produce marrows.

### Sowing & Growing

Courgettes and Marrows like a well-drained humus rich soil in an open sunny position with a dressing of mulch. The seed needs a minimum of 13oC to germinate which generally takes 5-8 days. For early crops sow in the greenhouse mid-late spring in peat pots, alternatively sow outdoors directly into the bed late May to early June.

Courgette and Marrow plants are quick growing so water regularly and feed if growth appears slow. You may need to help pollinate the flowers by removing the male flowers from the plant and bushing the pollen onto the female flowers which have the fruit developing behind. Hand pollination is not often required and is usually only needed with plants grown under cloches and frames.

Now available on the market are parthenocarpic varieties, meaning they can set fruit without pollination. This means weather conditions, light levels or lack of pollination insects is no longer a problem for a courgette or marrow crop.

### Harvest

Begin harvesting courgettes when the young fruits reach 10cm long. Picking young fruits encourages the development of more fruits. Leaving the fruits to reach 20-25cm produces a Marrow. To test the ripeness of the Marrow push your thumbnail into the surface near the stalk, if this is easy it is ripe for picking.

### Common Problems

Courgette and Marrow plants suffer from a few problems which affect the cucumber family such problems are:

- Powdery mildew – resistant varieties are now available
- Basel stem rot Red spider mite
- Grey mould (Botrytis) Eelworm
- Root rot Cucumber mosaic virus

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.