

Post Rock Answers

By Cassie Thiessen July 14, 2023

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Enjoying Your Harvest

There are many reasons why I love gardening, but the number one reason is the fresh produce we get to harvest every year. Picking vegetables out of your gardening and eating them fresh is such a great summertime treat. One of the veggies we often have in abundance during the summer is squash and zucchini. Here are some tips on how to harvest your bountiful garden.

People often use the terms squash and zucchini interchangeably. The term "squash" refers to a plant species within the gourd family, which is further divided into winter squash and summer squash. The winter types — think butternut, acorn and spaghetti squash — are physically hard, with inedible outer skins and very tough seeds. These are usually harvested in the fall around September. Summer squash is used at an immature stage before the skin and seeds have toughened. Zucchini falls into the summer category, as do pattypan, crookneck and yellow squash.

There are two things to remember about harvesting zucchini: pick them young and pick them often. Summer squash and zucchini are easy plants to grow and are harvested frequently throughout the summer. One plant often yields more than enough produce for a family. It's important to check your plants regularly throughout the summer so your fruits don't get too large. The ideal size of zucchini is about 6 to 10 inches long. Don't worry if you let your fruits get too large, bigger zucchinis are perfect for making bread or cake.

When harvesting the fruits, it is best to use pruners, scissors, or a knife. Leave about 1-2 inches of stem on the fruits you are picking. Store your harvest in the refrigerator for only a short time because they are prone to drying out.

August 8th is National "Sneak Some Zucchini onto Your Neighbors Porch Day", if you need to share your bounty! Below is an easy and healthy recipe to enjoy delicious summer squash.

Sautéed Squash and Onions

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large bunch green onions, chopped
- 1 pound yellow squash, cut in medium dice
- 1 pound zucchini, cut in medium dice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Heat a large skillet or stir fry pan.
2. Add the olive oil and heat slightly.
3. Add the onions and sauté 3-4 minutes.
4. Add the yellow squash and zucchini and cook, stirring frequently until the vegetables softens.
5. Add salt and pepper, start with ½ teaspoon of each.
6. Cook until desired doneness.
7. Adjust salt and pepper to taste.

K-State Research and Extension has a variety of resources for all your gardening and landscaping needs. Stop by or give us a call with your questions.

Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Cassie may be contacted at c Thiessen@ksu.edu or by calling Beloit (785-738-3597).