

# SFA

*Seeds for Africa*

## Squash – Zucchini – Baby Marrow - Courgette

**Marrow - Cucurbit a Pepo ovifera (fam. Cucurbitaceae)**

**The Vegetable Marrow or Courgette plant is a half hardy annual - vigorous trailing plant.**

**The marrow belongs to the family Cucurbitaceae.**

**The Pumpkin, Cucurbita Pepo, of which the Vegetable Marrow is a variety, is a native plant of the Near East**

**The marrow is an easy vegetable to grow - with care you can have a very large crop in a relatively short time.**

**Picked while young and tender the baby marrow known in France as the courgette and in Italy as zucchini make a very pleasant hot vegetable dish.**

**Marrows are climbing plants by nature.**

### **COURGETTE VARIETIES OF MARROW:**

**Although so-called courgette varieties of marrow are available, in fact the fruits of any marrow can be eaten small, and you can also eat the bright yellow flowers.**

### **HARVESTING MARROWS AND COURGETTES:**

**Sowing to harvest time: 12-14 weeks.**

**Size: courgettes best cut when 7.5-10cm (3-4") long; Marrows best cut when 25cm (10") long, but will grow to 1mtr (3`);**

**Yield: varies according to size cut—15-20 courgettes per plant; 5-6 marrows per plant, average weight of 1.5kg (3lb) each.**

## **TIPS ON CULTIVATION OF MARROWS AND COURGETTES:**

Full grown marrows tend to lack flavour so harvest them before they reach their maximum size.

Sometimes a marrow plant will make too luxuriant growth and does not bear fruits freely.

Commonly planted on heaps of decayed manure, garden refuse or turf, but it may be grown on the level ground or even on a trellis or arch.

In the latter position the flowers are well exposed to sunshine and air, and are therefore likely to bear fruits more freely than when the plants are grown on a mound of rich soil where the growth is so vigorous that the flowers are hidden among the large leaves.

## **PROBLEMS WITH MARROWS - NO FRUITS FORMING!**

Failure of the fruits to form - If the marrows or courgettes do not form, which is a common complaint, especially in a dull, damp summer and you find the crop disappointing; this is mostly due to planting in too rich a soil or a somewhat too shady place, failure to fertilize the blooms, and to the flowers being smothered by the too luxuriant leafage.

It is best to thin out some of the shoots to expose the remainder to air and sunlight.

## **POLLINATION OF MARROW AND COURGETTE FLOWERS:**

If it is very cold, wet or windy while the plants are flowering then natural pollination is less likely to be successful. Hand pollination is the best method in these circumstances.

Marrows under glass should always be hand pollinated.

The female flowers are distinguished by the swelling below the bloom.

Male flowers have a prominent central core, bearing yellow pollen.

The male flower is first to appear and the female flowers will follow.

To hand pollinate, remove the petals from a male flower; push the core into the centre of the female flower.

For a high success rate, use a different male for each female flower.

## **WHEN TO SOW MARROW SEEDS:**

The time for sowing depends on where the marrows are going to grow.

If grown entirely in a heated greenhouse marrow seed can be sown in situ in late winter, or early spring for transplanting to a cloche or cold frame.

If you do not have any glass, then delay sowing marrow seed until late spring to avoid damage from heavy frost.

A minimum temperature of 10c (50F) will be needed for germination, which can be supplied in the greenhouse, glazed porch, or cold frame.

Sow the seeds singly 1.2cm deep, in peat pots filled with seed compost. Sow the seeds on edge, not flat.

Germination should take place 10-14 days later. But if temperatures are higher you could expect sprouting in 4-6 days.

After germination the young plants will grow very quickly and will need re – potting almost at once.

#### **PLANTING OUT MARROWS AND COURGETTES:**

Harden off and when ready they can be planted outdoors with protection towards the end of mid spring.

#### **CARE OF VEGETABLE MARROW AND COURGETTE PLANTS:**

Do not let the plants dry out and at the same time do not over water. Hoe gently to keep the weeds down.

Avoid splashing water on the stems of the young marrow plants. You can apply a moist mulch about 1.2cm deep of grass cuttings or compost after watering. This helps conserve soil moisture and keeps the weeds down.

If roots appear above the surface of the soil, gently cover with 2.5cm of fine soil mixed with compost.

It is advisable to feed from time to time when watering with a liquid manure.

#### **HARVESTING MARROWS:**

Pick marrows before the skin hardens; your finger nails should be able to pierce the skin easily.

Cut the marrows with a knife or secateurs - do not pull them off.

Harvesting the fruit when young encourages the plant to produce more fruit - since marrows tend to be heavy croppers and the baby ones have more flavour this seems to be a good policy.

Bushy Plants should be allowed to ripen as they are of poor flavour until mature.

© Seeds for Africa Limited

No part of this document may be reproduced, copied or distributed without the express written permission of the Directors of Seeds for Africa Limited.

[www.seedsforafrica.co.za](http://www.seedsforafrica.co.za)

*Seeds for Africa*