

Patient Expert Produces Predictably Unique Gourds

The only way to produce a consistent and predictable type of gourd is to hand-pollinate - or grow just one kind of gourd. That's because gourds are notorious for cross-pollinating with each other, regardless of the variety.

Anna Miller and her partner Dick Bostdorff of Quarry Farm Gourds in Wood County, Ohio, specialize in pure varieties, offering a wide selection of seed types.

"One gourd variety can be contaminated with another if there's a second variety anywhere up to a mile away," she says.

Miller knows that a buyer wanting "snake" gourd seeds isn't going to be happy if a "goose" gourd shows up instead.

Miller grows more than 50 types of gourds with widely ranging shapes, sizes and colors.

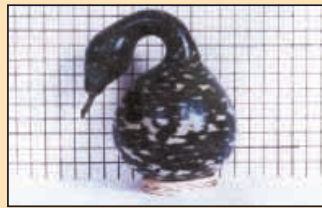
To prevent cross pollination she monitors plants daily between June and early August. That's because female blossoms only open for one night. When Miller can see a female

that's about to bloom, she covers the flower with a mesh bag. She also tapes the male flower to keep unwanted pollen from mixing with its own.

"The flowers open in the evening, so it's often dark while I'm hand pollinating each female with the pollen of at least two different male plants of the same variety," she says. "I do this to avoid too much inbreeding."

When the seeds are ready to harvest, Miller drills a hole in the gourd, removes the seeds, washes them, and spreads them out to dry. After doing a germination test to ensure the seeds have at least 80 percent germination, they're bagged, labeled and refrigerated until being sold the following February for \$3 per dozen.

She sells between 12,000 and 15,000 seed bags per year. Since the plants and the gourds themselves are obvious byproducts of the business, Miller also sells them. She decorates the gourds and sells them as birdhouses



Anna Miller and her partner Dick Bostdorff of Quarry Farm Gourds specialize in pure varieties, offering a wide selection of seed types. They grow more than 50 types of gourds with widely ranging shapes, sizes and colors. Miller also decorates gourds and sells them as birdhouses or other crafts.



or other crafts.

Most of her seed sales are to individual gardeners, but Miller also supplies some large wholesale gourd growers in Pennsylvania, Texas and Missouri. Her mail order service is available to 48 states and international customers.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Quarry Farm Gourds, 12091 Eagleville Rd., North Baltimore, Ohio 45872 (ph 419 257-2597; anna@quarryfarmgourds.com; www.quarryfarmgourds.com).

Unusual Pumpkin Varieties

If you're tired of planting the same varieties in your garden year after year, why not try something new?

We tracked down some attention-getting varieties of pumpkins that come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Johnny's Selected Seeds and Double Rabbit Farm are two seed companies that carry dozens of varieties of pumpkins, including the ones shown here.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Johnny's Selected Seeds, 955 Benton Avenue, Winslow, Maine 04901 (ph 877 564-6697, business line 207 861-3900; catalog store 207 861-3999; fax (U.S. only) 800 738-6314, (non-U.S.): 207 861-8363), or Double Rabbit Farm, 27211 Co. Hwy. 4, Lamberton, Minn. 56152 (ph 507 752-6008).



Full Moon - The "Great White" of pumpkins.



Wolf - Round pumpkins with very thick, long, strong handles.



Rouge vif D'Etampes - Flat-looking fruit resembles a red cheese wheel.



Queensland Blue - Has bluish-green, buttercup-shaped fruits with deep ribbing.



Marina Di Chioggia - Has a blistery, bubbled, slate blue-green rind.



Jarrahdale - Decorative, slate-gray, ribbed fruits with heavy, rounded ribs.

"Tomatoberry" Appeals To Children

When Ike Tokita took home a new tomato variety shaped like a strawberry, his 2-year-old daughter gave him a name for it - Tomatoberry.

Tokita, president and CEO of Tokita Seed Co., a 90-year-old Japanese company, says the shape was accidental, but it became popular very quickly.

"It's obviously the shape that attracts consumers, but it's the taste that keeps them coming back," he says.

Tokita seed breeders are innovators in the cherry tomato market. They also created Sungold, an orange cherry tomato.

Tomatoberry, a 1-in. fruit, created a lot of buzz at a big Produce Marketing Show last fall, Tokita says. Already available in Japan, it will be available to the rest of the world next summer.

It will be available to gardeners through Johnny's Selected Seeds of Maine. "We trialed the product and it met all our taste and yield standards," says Bruce Harrington, director of sales and marketing for Johnny's. "It's got a great taste and a nice firm texture."

Tomatoberry matures in about 60 days and have a heavy yield. They're sweet, with a low acidity and a deep red color.

"This will be great in salads and appealing in the grocery store," Harrington says.

Wherever they're sold, the variety will be brand marketed as Tomatoberry. Based on Tokita's daughter's reaction, it may attract a new consumer base.

"Its shape, color, glossiness and taste at-



This new tomato variety is shaped like a strawberry. "It's the shape that attracts consumers, but it's the taste that keeps them coming back," says seed breeder Ike Tokita.

tract kids who don't normally eat tomatoes," Tokita says.

Gardeners can purchase the seeds through Johnny's Selected Seeds starting at \$4.25 for 10 seeds.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Johnny's Selected Seeds, 955 Benton Avenue, Winslow, Maine 04901 (ph 877 564-6697; www.johnnyseeds.com).

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