



THE TEXAS GOURDZETTE

Volume 10, issue 1

Texas Gourd Society

March 2005

SPRING MEETING

2004 Spring Meeting activities showed how to make flowers from egg-shaped Gourds and John Conley taught a jewelry class. One class was for making gourd instruments, and Lynda Smith, the TGS featured artist for 2004 taught a class on gourd painting. This year will feature Judy Richie, TGS "Best of Show" winner with 8 blue ribbons, and winner of Judges' Choice and People's choice in Arizona. Meet this gourd artist and discover her winning secrets. Directions for the Spring Meeting can be found on PAGE 9.



Growers sell dry, cleaned gourds at the March 12 Spring Meeting in Austin; **Bob Schuetze** will give planting and growing tips in his popular "Seeds to Sale" class. You can get seeds and plants, too. Other classes include: **Bev Tomek** will demonstrate "Embossing Metal Images" – **Eve Dewvall** and **Lelia Sublett** will give a hands-on class on paint marbilizing effects – **Sue Haberer** will present Health and Safety for Gourd Crafters. Box Lunches are \$8. Contact Clara Willibey, willibey@sbcglobal.net or 281-493-0117. VOTE March 12.

Nominated TGS Officer Candidates

Nominees from Left to Right

Sue Haberer, Vice President (previous Director)
 Clara Willibey, Secretary (previous committee work)
 Sharon Copenhaver, Treasurer (past Fall Show Chair)
 Robbie Pritchard, President (See Robbie Article, Page 2)
 Gerry Flewharty, Membership (Past Secretary/Membership)
 Joe Pritchard, Historian (not in photo)
 Bill Willibey, Gourdette Editor (not in photo)



President's Message March 2005

This will be my last message to you as your President.....I want to thank each one of you members of Texas Gourd Society for all you have done to make our chapter grow as it has. You have made my job easy and enjoyable, (well, at least most of the time). A friend of mine asked, "Betty, what are you going to do now?" And I answered that I am going to have more time to work on and play with my gourds. I have an idea that I can't wait to get started on. Maybe I will get it done by show time.

We, as TGS, are launching into a new year with new officers, a new location and dates for our Fall Show. It has the possibility of being the best year in our history. I am very excited with our choice to make the big move, and the opportunities it holds for TGS. Our new officers, President Robbie Pritchard, Treasurer Sharon Copenhaver, Vice President Sue Haberer, Secretary Clara Willibey, Membership Officer, Gerry Flewharty, and Historian, Joe Pritchard will have a wonderful group of GOOD GOURD PEOPLE to work with. You are the best! I know you will support them as you have supported me. And we will all continue to improve our society in every way possible. It does take all of us working together to make it good.

WELCOME PRESIDENT ROBBIE AND "MAY GOD BLESS US EVERYONE!"

Betty Kent



Meet Robbie Pritchard by Joe Pritchard

Robbie was born and raised in Beaumont, Texas. She has lived in Texas all her life except for three years in California and three years in Florida.

Robbie loves both gardening and art; "In 1998, Joe and I purchased a house with enough land that I could finally do some serious gardening. When I discovered gourds, I realized they were the perfect thing for me. I could have all the fun of planting and growing them. Then, I could have even more fun crafting something I had grown into a wonderful finished art object. Every gourd is different and every one tells you what it wants to be." In 1989, Robbie received her Associate of Fine Arts Degree from Tarrant County College.

Robbie is finishing a term on the board of the Arlington Organic Garden Club and has been elected as Vice President of the Arlington Garden Club. She was a charter member of the TGS Cowtown Gourd patch in 2002 and is currently secretary of that Patch. In the summer of 2003, she became Vice

President of Arlington Council of Garden Clubs in District II of Texas Garden Clubs, and helped organize the TGS Arlington Gourd Patch this past September, where she is currently treasurer and events organizer.

In the Spring of 2003, Robbie helped start the Children's Discovery Garden at the Fielder House Museum with Esther Chambliss and Nancy Hagwood. Classes of school children visit to see how vegetables and herbs are grown. She planted various gourds, including luffas, on tall fences around this garden to create interest in gourds.

Robbie has represented TGS Cowtown and TGS Arlington Patches at numerous garden shows and festivals in the Arlington and Fort Worth area. In 2004, she hosted information and sale item tables for the Patches at six garden shows and at the Fall Convention of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. Using musical gourd instruments that she borrowed from Bea and Larry Kruse of Gourd Harmony in Harker Heights, she assembled an educational display at the Fielder House Museum in Arlington and won the Best Educational Display Award and two ribbons.

Robbie lives in southwest Arlington with her husband Joe, and seven cats. "I envision the Texas Gourd Society as becoming more active in educating the public to the fun, utility, and beauty of gourds. I hope we can expand our membership by reaching out with more educational and informational programs throughout Texas."

If you have not met Robbie, come to the TGS Spring meeting. Let us all welcome her to lead the TGS.

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TGS AND AGS COLLECTION OF DUES To join or renew American Gourd Society dues, pay \$15 directly to AGS PO Box 2186 Kokomo, IN 46904 2186, phone 765-453-5047 or email agsmembership@insightbb.com TGS no longer collects American Gourd Society Dues. Texas Gourd Society annual dues of \$12 will be paid separately each year by TGS members. This will be pro-rated at \$1 per month to expire December 31 each year. If your membership is due for renewal in April, send \$9 for renewal. See details on last page of this issue or the TGS website at: www.texasgourdsociety.org		

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A TWO-DAY SPECTACULAR GOURD SHOW

- Gourd Artists
- The TGS Bookstore
- Judged Competition
- Featured Artist—Judy Richie, TGS 2004
“Best of Show” winner with 8 blue ribbons
- Raffle
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www.texasgourdsociety.org

Contacts:

Lee DeKeyser, 2005 Show Chair, flintrock@ev1.net, 512-280-2390
Betty Kent, TGS President, bpkent@industryinet.com, 979-357-2603
Robbie Pritchard, TGS President-Elect, robbiesgarden@hotmail.com, 817-905-3178

PATCH HAPPENINGS

CAPITAL OF TEXAS GOURD PATCH Our December Christmas gathering at Eve and Lee Dewvall's home was enjoyed by all, with great food, camaraderie, and a fun gift exchange. Demonstrations of pyrography (including Valentine hearts) by Lelia Sublett, and an acrylic paint transfer technique by Eve Dewvall were enjoyable and informative highlights of our February meeting.

Contact Jimmy & Lelia Sublett at 6 S. Valley View, Wimberley, TX 78676. Phone: (512)847-8102 e-mail: sublett@riverrats.net or Jocelyn Guajardo, Secretary

THE HEART OF TEXAS GOURD PATCH had 20 patch members and guests who met at Yianni's Restaurant in West, Texas on Saturday, January 29, 2005. We enjoyed visiting, sharing and showing current projects and a nice Greek lunch. Our program featured bread dough clay recipes and instructions by Sandee Toone. Robert Thundercloud brought a fabulous gourd he is working on with our patch logo on it. Merrill and Sandee Toone brought door prizes of wonderful small gourds from their garden. February "gourd gathering" will be Saturday, February 26 at 11am at the El Conquistador in Hillsboro, Texas. Members and guests will bring "works in progress" to show and share. Will and Angelia Orr will provide door prizes. Robert Thundercloud will show us how he constructs his artwork from gourd and gourd pieces. We look forward to meet in Austin March 12 for our monthly "gourd gathering". We welcome any new participants.

Contact Angelia Orr info@mountainspringsfarm.com 254-582-9586

TGS Arlington Gourd Patch resumed monthly meetings on January 16, 2005, after taking December off for the holidays. Our January meeting featured discussions of programs for the 2005 meetings and a review of last year's programs. In January, Robbie and Joe Pritchard attended the pot-luck dinner, gift exchange and meeting of Cowtown Patch. Robbie Pritchard and Esther Chambliss also attended the Heart of Texas Patch meeting in West, Texas. On February 19, Robbie Pritchard, Cindi Creswell, and Esther Chambliss led a discussion on Luffa gourds - growing and uses at the Johnson County Herb Society. Their program was enthusiastically accepted; lively discussions and questions took place during the presentation. This program generated lots of interest in gourding and in TGS.

February's program featured an educated and informative talk by Dave Hodgson on planting and growing gourds. Dave grows gourds on his property in Alvord, Texas, and has won several awards. Cindi Creswell also provided additional growing information on container-growing of gourds. We had our largest attendance yet, with six visitors who are prospective TGS members.

At the March meeting, Juanita Munoz will demonstrate and discuss Easter-themed gourds she has created. In addition, Chuck Malson, a member of Fort Worth Woodcarvers, will present a talk on craving gourds. Chuck has previously taught classes on gourd carving. Some of the patch members will bring their carving tools so all may practice while an expert is on hand. We will be hosting an information and items-for-sale table at several garden shows and festivals this spring and summer in the Fort Worth and Arlington areas. Robbie Pritchard has been nominated to become TGS President for 2005. Voting for this nomination will take place at the Spring meeting of TGS in Austin March 12 - see you there!

- **Contact:** Robbie Pritchard (Treasurer/Events) 817-905-3178 robbiesgarden@hotmail.com; Cindi Creswell 817-244-0135 cidnboo@att.net; Esther Chambliss (President) 817-263-9322; Joe Pritchard 817-909-2814 (Newsletter/Website). Email arlingtongourdpatch@hotmail.com; Website www.freewebs.com/arlingtongourdpatch.

EAST TEXAS PINEY WOODS GOURD PATCH Eddie Pearson with Vital Earth Resources, in Gladewater, TX. was the guest speaker for the February 29 meeting in Longview, TX. Mr. Pearson explained the importance of soil testing to determine which nutrients are needed. Vital Earth will be creating a fertilizer specifically for gourds. ETPWP is partnering with Vital Earth to grow bigger, thicker gourds. The patch plans to document the process from seed to finished product. Now is the time to prep your soil for spring planting. Vital Earth's website is www.vitalearth.com/

A lot of work and anticipation go into gourd growing. Keep in mind that unless you plant seeds advertised as "hand-pollinated" or 90% pure, you will likely get gourds of all different shapes, not just the shape advertised on the package. Gourd seeds can also be sold as "isolated" which means they were grown in isolation so it is less likely that they cross-pollinated with other shapes. These seeds have a higher chance of being "true." But the only way to be sure of getting a true seed is to hand pollinate.

Patch information: Patty Gilliland Email calabash75605@aol.com 903 663 0017 Piney Woods Web site <http://www.geocities.com/pwgourds/patch.htm>

The Cowtown Patch has no news for this issue.

Contact: barb petroski - Phone (817) 249-2929 or lunarwind7@aol.com.

THE SOUTHEAST TEXAS GOURD PATCH met Jan 8th at the Spring Creek Feed Store in Tomball. Gene Endicott taught a class on chipping gourds. On Feb 5th the patch met at the Katy Library meeting room where Ray Wolman showed a digital photo presentation on growing gourds. On March 5th a class will be taught on polymer clay crafting on gourds at the Spring Creek Feed Store. The patch will present gourds at the Katy ISD Folklife Festival on April 2 and conduct a children's activity.

The patch is invited to participate in the Moody Gardens Gulf Coast Gardening Expo on April 23 and 24. Anyone interested in volunteering a few hours for either of the April events is should contact patch leaders at browngourd@msn.com for information.

Contact: Delanie Brownson: browngourd@msn.com or 281-391-9891-SE Patch website: www.geocities.com/TGS_southeast.

WEST TEXAS GOURD PATCH has no news for this issue.

Contact: Sue Haberer – Levelland, TX 806-894-1711 or dhaberer@valornet.com

THE DALLAS GOURD PATCH had 17 Gourdheads, including one guest/prospective member, who met in Denton for our February get together. Everyone brought sack lunches, and talked gourds for several hours. Our next meeting will be March 19, in Dallas, at Raymonds Barbeque.

Contact: John and Sharon Flewharty - Denton, TX 940-380-9566 or jmf1511@juno.com.

+++++

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UPCOMING EVENTS

March 12 Texas Gourd Society Spring Meeting in Austin-See Page one, and check TGS website for more details.

Mar 19-20 Georgia Gourd Society and Basket Weaver's show in Albany, GA. See www.georgiagourdsociety.com for details.

Apr 2-3 Indiana Gourd Society Show in Kokomo, Indiana. Competition, workshops, and vendors. See IGS website for details

April 23-25 Show Me (Missouri) Gourd Society Festival at the State Fairgrounds in Sedalia, MO.

May13-15 Kentucky Gourd Show – see KGS website for details

May 14-15 South Carolina Gourd Gathering

May 14-15 Spring Gourd Art Festival and Gourd Sale at Greg Leiser farms in Northern California

May 20-22 Gourd Art Gathering in Cherokee, North Carolina

June 11 Pennsylvania Gourd Society annual Gourd Fest in Harrisburg, PA

June 25-26 Ninth annual international Gourd Art Festival – Welburn Gourd Farm in Fallbrook, CA

Oct 15, 16 Tenth Annual Texas Fall "Show and Sell" – new location and new dates. See Page 4.

You may get more information on the AGS website or the individual state website, or contact the editor of TGS



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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Bill Willibey - willibey@sbcglobal.net 281-493-0117

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MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

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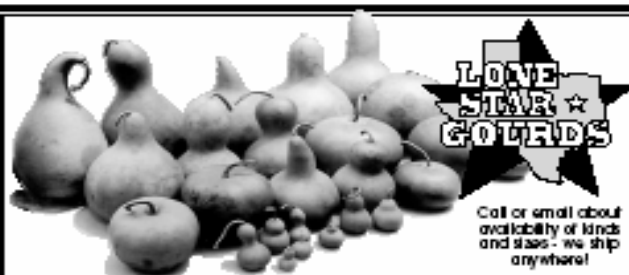
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NEW PATCH FORMATION?

Judy Richie, our new TGS featured artist, would like to form a new patch in the Kerrville & Hill Country area. Please contact Judy - 830-257-8939 or email: judyrichie@yahoo.com

TGS Officer and Board Contact Information

Robbie Pritchard-President, robbiesgarden@hotmail.com	817-905-3178
Sue Haberer - V.P. dhaberer@valornet.com	806-894-1711
Sharon Copenhaver-Treasurer clscope@sbcglobal.net	817-297-0328
Gerry Flewharty - Membership 2flews@flash.net	214-341-2614
Clara Willibey - Secretary willibey@sbcglobal.net	281-493-0117

Betty & Jim Lewis - director betsgem@juno.com	254-982-4386
Ramon Williams - director williamsgourds@aol.com	512-376-3030
Sandee & Merrill Toone-director stoone@txun.net	254-622-3566
Betty Kent - Past President bpkent@industryinet.com	979-357-2603
Bill Willibey-Gourdzette Editor willibey@sbcglobal.net	281-493-0117

NOW MEMBERS CAN BUY CUPS, CAPS, T-SHIRTS and other items with the TGS LOGO

The Texas Gourd Society has made arrangements for members to purchase TGS Logo merchandise. All items will depict the new TGS Logo. Go to www.cafepress.com/TXGourdSociety to view the items for sale, and purchase them. Be the first in your Patch to get the Logo Merchandise. Mugs, magnets and decals will be shown as samples at the Spring and Fall TGS meetings, and will be available for purchase at the meetings. You can also view TGS Logo Merchandise At the TGS website www.texasgourdsociety.com

TGS MEMBER GOURD GROWERS – LET US KNOW IF YOU BELONG ON THIS LIST

JS Gourds	Jack & Sarah Calender	15566 CR3110	Gladewater	75647	903-845-3695	jsgourds@hotmail.com
Foothills Farm	Virginia Clark	11341 Eddyburg Rd	Newark, OH	43055	877-346-8445	clark@foothillsfarm.com www.foothillsfarm.com
Sunset Hill Gourd & Vegetable Farm	Tracy Fajkus	1 8827 N. Hwy 95	Flatonia	78941	830-839-4724	
Gourdgeous Farm	Gourdgeous Farm	5174 CR 6575 E	Bradenton, FL	34211	941-723-6051	sales@gourdgeousfarm.com
Gourds	John & Vicki Hall	5196 CR3710 PO Box 1015	Athens	75751	903-677-4733	vhall918@earthlink.net
Lindy Crafts and Gourd Farm	Linda Higgins	Route 2, Box 91	Dekalb	75559	903-667-5109	
Carolina Gourds and Seeds	Harry Hurley	259 Fletcher Avenue	Fuquay Varina, NC	27526	919-557-5946	harryhurley@hotmail.com www.carolinagourdsandseeds.com
Kent Gourd Farm	Betty & Pete Kent	7521 Hoppe Sister Road	New Ulm	78950	979-357-2603	bpkent@industryinet.com
Gourd Mill	Dorothy Miller	789 CR 146	San Saba	76877	915-372-5210	dmiller2@centex.net
Mountain Springs Farm, Ltd.	Will & Angelia Orr	1015 HCR 4235	Hillsboro	76645	254-582-9586	angelia_orr@hillsboro.net www.mountainspringsfarm.com
Gourds	Bill & Pam Salzman	1001 Forgotten Land	Alvarado	76009	817-790-8472	himandher5@prodigy.net
Gourds	Robert & Doris Schuetze	1207 N. 64 th St.	Waco	76710	254-772-4519	
Don's Gourd Farm	Don & Mary Sills	3970 State Hwy 154	Marshall	75670	903-935-6871	Donsgourdfarm@direcway.com
Gourds	David A. Williams	8964 FM 1940	Franklin	77856	979-828-5396	gourds@tconline.net
Lone Star Gourds	Mike Wood & Carol Steele	2803 FM 225 South	Henderson	75654	903-657-0486	csteele@cox.com
Rising Dawn Gourd Farm	Gay Wright	174 Kellar Rd	Smithville	78957	512-360-2023	alcyone@cmyfarm.com
This & That & Gourds	Kim & Larry Wall	PO Box 351	Gause	77857	979-280-5197	Kim4C@aol.com
Gay Hill Gourd Farm	Carl & Cindy Weems	303 Gilmore Rd	Brenham	77833	979-277-0329	cweems@earthlink.net

TGS Spring Meeting March 12 at 11 a.m. Directions to The LCRA Building

From I-35, take the 6th street exit, and go west. Sixth street is one-way and becomes Lake Austin Blvd, and will take you between the lake and a golf course. The driveway into the building is the first right turn after the traffic light at Red Bud Trail. Bring a friend or 2.

SEE YOU THERE !

Planting and Growing Gourds

Presented by **Dave Hodgson**
to TGS Arlington Gourd Patch
February 20, 2005

[by Joe Pritchard, TGS Arlington Gourd Patch] The TGS Arlington Gourd Patch February 20, 2005, meeting featured an informative and educated presentation by TGS member Dave Hodgson. Dave is a retired professor who now lives in Alvord (Wise County), Texas, about an hour and fifteen minutes northwest of Arlington. Dave has raised gourds in many locations – Texas, Nebraska, Ohio, and South Carolina. All locations have their pluses and minuses, as far as the raising gourds is concerned. He raised his first gourds in Travis County, Texas, in 1959. Dave has entered his gourds in recent Texas Oklahoma Regional Fairs and has won several awards. This past season, Dave raised the third largest gourd he has grown to date – 54" in circumference.

Dave says that his property in North Texas consists of alluvial clay, which is not especially good for growing gourds because gourds like lots of water and clay soils do not hold water well. Thus, his growing areas require a lot more work. Those who are fortunate enough to live in East Texas have black lands prairie soils, which are created from decayed limestone and hold water much better.

In 1959, Dave bought his first packet of gourd seeds at the local store; results were not that great. But, he was hooked! Most gourd growers, and particularly artists, are most likely looking for plants that produce gourds that are predictable in size and shape. Seed packets bought in garden and feed stores probably won't always produce such results. Dave says the best way to get such predictable gourds is to purchase the seeds from a grower who guarantees that the seeds are from gourds that were grown isolated from other gourd types; cross-pollination is a problem. He says the best sources for such seeds are probably from those who advertise in the American Gourd Society's "*The Gourd*." He says seeds from these sellers are usually quite inexpensive, and the follow-up from those who sell the seeds is outstanding.

A long-growing season (90 to 130 days) is important for gourds. North Texas has an ideal season and is probably one of the farthest north areas with such a forgiving season. One can start planting as much as two months late and still have a sufficient growing time for gourds to properly "harden off" before the first frost/freeze. Gourd seeds need warm ground temperatures to germinate. The ground should be noticeably warm to your hand over a whole day's time. Thus, you must wait until all danger of frost and freeze is over and the soil has warmed. You may soak the seeds overnight in room-temperature water prior to planting; some say this speeds germination. Seeds usually take 7 to 10 days to germinate but could take longer if the soil is not warm when the seeds are planted. You may start your gourds indoors if you live in cooler areas or want an early start. Plant the seeds in peat pots 3 to 4 weeks before your usual gardening time begins. Gourd plants transplant fairly well, but you must be careful not to damage the roots.

Dave says he plants his gourds in long rows running east to west. When the plant vines begin to "run," Dave tries to alternate them left and right of the row in order to maximize sunlight usage. He piles all his lawn cuttings, leaves and other compostable materials in a row next to where he will plant. He then digs a trench about the width of three shovel blades and the depth of one-half shovel blade. He rakes all the mulch materials into the trench and covers that with the soil he removed. This helps amend the clayey soil in his area. Plant the seeds in the prepared trench. This year, Dave plans to experiment with placing tar paper on either side of the row of gourd plants to help choke out weeds and grass. He says he knows he will have to keep adjusting the tar paper to ensure that plants get sufficient water. Dave will report the results of this experiment at a fall meeting.

Gourds need an awful lot of water – a constant supply of water is necessary. A week without water and your plants may die. Once the plants emerge and begin growing, they may add up to a foot of vine length per day. You may notice that the leaves closest to the plant base may appear wilted during the day – even though you are watering – while the leaves at the end of the plant appear fine. This is the plant's compensation for the high rate of dehydration caused by Texas's hot, sunny days; water is directed to the new growth and to the gourds at the end of the vine. By evening, the wilted leaves should appear OK again. When the plants first emerge, rabbits love the tender plants. Once full-size leaves appear, almost nothing will eat them; gourd plants apparently have a bitter quality that repels animals.

Some say that you should pinch off the last 1/8" of vine when it reaches 10 feet in length. The theory is that by doing so, you will force the plant to direct all its energy into the lateral tendrils where the gourds grow. Dave says he has not been able to prove or disprove this theory. Others say that the laterals produce most of the female flowers.

Gourds are night-blooming (at least the *Lagenaria*, or hard-shelled varieties). The white flowers begin to open as the sun goes down. Male flowers predominate early on; within a couple of months, you should also see plenty of female flowers on the lateral vines – they have a small round bulb at the base of their bloom. Many claim that you should hand-pollinate the blooms. Use an artist's brush to collect the yellow pollen from the male flower and then dust the female flower. Or, you can just pinch off a male bloom and rub it on the female bloom. Dave says everyone should try this for a year or so, to feel you are "in control" of the pollinating. Then, just give up, because there are sufficient night-flying insects to accomplish natural pollination.

Gourds do not need a whole lot of attention from you. But, they need water every day. It is best to water early in the morning, when it is relatively cooler and the evaporation rate is a little slower. Gourd leaves are susceptible to mildew; overhead watering could cause problems. Drip irrigation or soaker hoses are probably best. Dave says you should fertilize your gourd plants every couple of weeks. Fertilizer heavy in **potash** seems best; it promotes healthy vines and large, thick-walled gourds. Be careful of using too much nitrogen, as it favors vine growth and tends to retard fruiting.

Gourds may be grown on the ground or on trellises. If you use trellises, they must be strong enough to support your gourds – remember gourds are about 90% water before they begin drying. A gourd Dave grew last year weighed 89 pounds at harvest; it still weighs 40 pound four months later. The base is the weakest part of the gourd. If you grow them in the uneven ground, you will probably need to place a plank or a pad of newspapers under the gourd to produce an even base so the gourd will sit properly when it has been crafted into a beautiful art object.

In the fall, when the stem from the vine to the gourd is rigid and dry, there is no more nourishment flowing to the gourd. You may harvest it then by cutting the gourd from the vine, leaving at least 2" of stem intact on the gourd (water evaporates through this stem piece). Many people prefer to just let the gourd begin its drying process on the vine. They may even be left to dry through freezes and frosts. The vines will die at the first sign of frost. Any gourds not mature at the first frost will usually collapse and be useless.

Smaller gourds, up to football-size, will typically cure out in about 60 days or so. Larger gourds may take six months or more to cure and dry completely. You can leave the gourds outside to dry. However, Dave says, squirrels love gourd seeds and seem to have a sixth sense as to when the seeds are ready. They will eat a hole in the gourd and eat all the seeds. And, of course, the hole is not where you would want it for crafting.

TGS Arlington Gourd Patch is planning a field trip to Dave's gourd patch in July. At that time, he said, there should be lots of gourds in all various stages of growth. We invite anyone to join us on this field trip. More details on the date and time for the field trip will be posted on our website www.freewebs.com/arlingtongourdpatch.

Container-Growing of Gourds

Presented by **Cindi Creswell**

to TGS Arlington Gourd Patch

February 20, 2005

[by Joe Pritchard, TGS Arlington Gourd Patch] TGS member and Arlington Patch Secretary Cindi Creswell presented a talk on container-growing of gourds to our February 20, 2005, meeting.

Gourds may be grown in containers if you have limited space. Cindi recommends large, plastic planters 24" or larger in diameter. Do not use terra cotta planters because they dry out too rapidly. Miniature gourds and the smaller ornamental gourds (*Cucurbita* family) lend themselves well to container-growing. The hard-shell *Lagenaria* gourds are generally too large to grow in containers.

You must have good drainage at the bottom of the container. A layer of rocks, pebbles, or broken clay pots will prevent water from standing in your container. Fill the container with composted materials and good-quality potting soil. Fill an empty egg shell (save them from breakfast and cooking) with good potting soil. Place a seed in the soil in the shell. Use Styrofoam egg cartons that contain a small amount of water. Place your seed-in-a-shell in the egg cartons. Keep them in a warm area – seeds prefer temperatures of 85 to 90 degrees to germinate.

Once all danger of frost and freeze has passed, you may plant your seedlings in the containers. Make a small hole or crack in the bottom of the egg shell so the roots can grow through. Plant the seedling – egg shell and all – about three per container. Plants grown in containers like some shade, but they also require sun. You will have to water your container gourds frequently, since the containers dry out quickly. But – don't over water them!

You will have to construct some type of vertical framework for your container gourds to climb. The simplest structure to make is a cylinder of medium-gauge wire mesh which can be wrapped around the pot and extend approximately four feet above the upper edges of the pot. Simply direct the emerging vines to the wire mesh. Or, you can use four wood or PVC pipe rods stuck in the pot around the perimeter; use twine or wire mesh to provide a growing "cage." Or, stick a single rod in the center of the pot and then create a "tepee" with heavy garden twine. In any case, allow at least four feet above the surface of the container for growing. Finally, you could place the containers along a chain-link or wire mesh fabric fence and let the vines grow on the fence.

Gourd plants may have several types and shapes of gourds on the same vine, especially the miniature and ornamental gourds. Three of Cindi's container-grown plants yielded 80 miniature gourds of varying types and shapes. Ornamental and miniature gourds usually mature in 110 to 130 days. They should be harvested before any sign of frost or freeze. Dry them as you would any other gourd – lots of air flow and separated from each other. Ornamentals will usually dry in a couple of weeks after harvest. Discard any gourds that are collapsing or that have damage so they do not contaminate the rest of your crop. The bright skin colors on ornamental gourds usually begins to fade in three to four months. A protective coating of paste wax or floor wax and a soft buffing may increase their life to four to six months.

Gourd Coloring Books are available for your Patch events – Contact Lee DeKeyser, Betty Kent, or Robbie Pritchard

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP
TEXAS GOURD SOCIETY**

The Kappa Chapter, TEXAS GOURD SOCIETY (TGS) is part of the American Gourd Society (AGS). Membership benefits of TGS include quarterly newsletters called THE TEXAS GOURDZETTE, source information for seeds, gourds, educational materials, show information, tools, seminars, workshops, meetings, horticulture, demonstrations, ideas for embellishing and more. Texas is divided into regions called "TGS Gourd Patches". Dues for the TGS are \$12 per year prorated at \$1 per month, expiring Dec 31.

Two state meetings are held: one spring and one fall meeting.
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If there is a red Arrow on or near the mail Label, this indicates that your membership is due and should be renewed.

PLEASE HELP TGS WITH CHANGES IN YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION – Contact Gerry Flewharty, Betty Kent, or Bill Willibey with changes or corrections, including your EMAIL.

Because Texas is a large area, it is divided into regions called "TGS Gourd Patches" which meet in designated locations throughout the state and unite Gourders with common interests. As a member, you are welcome to meet with the local patch in your area and join in their activities to learn more about gourds.

Want to see this issue in full color? Send me an email see how easy it is.

The Texas Gourdzette is published quarterly for members of the Texas Gourd Society, Inc. Publishing Dates are:

Q1: 3/15

Q2: 6/15

Q3: 9/15

Q4:12/15

Please send your ideas, questions, photographs, and comments to: Editor, the Texas Gourdzette, 11411 Ashcreek, Houston, TX 77043 Phone 281-493-0117 willibey@sbcglobal.net