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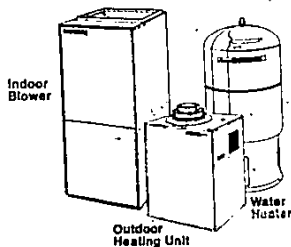
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veggies

Squash: Productivity is rarely a problem

It's a fact. A few summer squash plants make a summer of mighty good eating. A garden full make the eyes roll, head spin and that recipe book with 999 ways to prepare squash get old in a hurry.

One way to avoid the summer madness often associated with squash overpopulation is to purchase your summer squash pre-germinated in peat pods or cell packs at your garden supplier. You can choose the number you will need for an ample supply. The peat pot is an ideal growth chamber for squash. No root disturbance need occur at transplanting time as both peat pot and seedling go into the ground. Avoid shock as much as possible during transplanting procedures for all members of this family, including melons, cucumbers, winter squash and pumpkins.

Productivity is rarely a problem with summer squash. Versatility in varieties can yield a bounty of differing flavors and shapes, colors and textures.

Last year a bright yellow hybrid, Gold Rush walked off with honors as an All-America Selection. It's not hard to find Gold Rush at its optimum size of seven to eight inches; the color is a giveaway. Picked at peak, the zucchini-type yields solid-textured and fine-flavor fruit.

If green fruit is preferred, select a few started plants of zucchini. One of its hybrid virtues includes an open bush habit to

reduce the seek and find so often a problem with this species. Ideal size for this variety is seven to eight inches. Larger fruit of any zucchini rapidly lose flavor and texture.

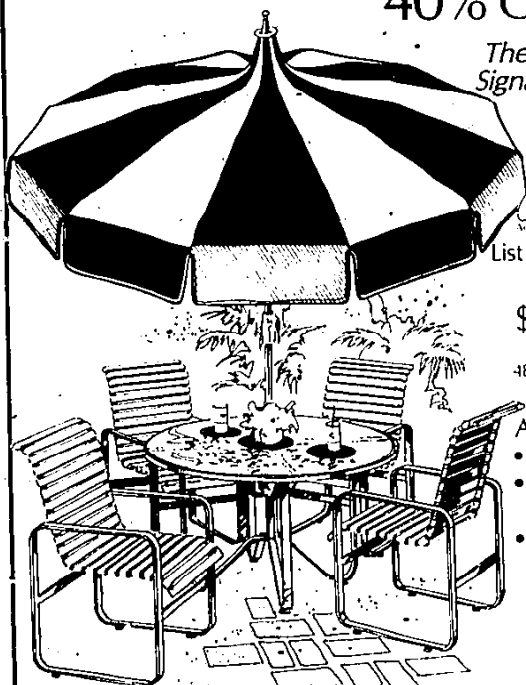
Long storing winter types can also be purchased as started plants for a stretched season of good eating without an expanse of garden space. Semibush Early Butternut ranked an award two years ago for its compact habit and wide adaptability to all regions of the country. Look for a solid shell for best keeping winter types. Improved varieties like Table Ace also have smaller seed cavities and less stringy fruit. Stack winter squash at a maximum of two deep for best deep for best winter storage.

All members of the squash family rely on bees for pollination. If the vegetable garden is sprayed with insecticide, make sure that applications are only made late in the day to avoid bee kill. Don't try to save your seeds squash for the following season. The busy pollinators may have carried pollen from winter and summer squash to pumpkins. These three vegetables will not evidence the cross-pollination during the first season. Seed saved for the next year may yield a strange new plant.

For zero population growth after you have picked all the fruit you want, try this tip: Pick the blossoms, dip in batter and fry for a new taste treat.

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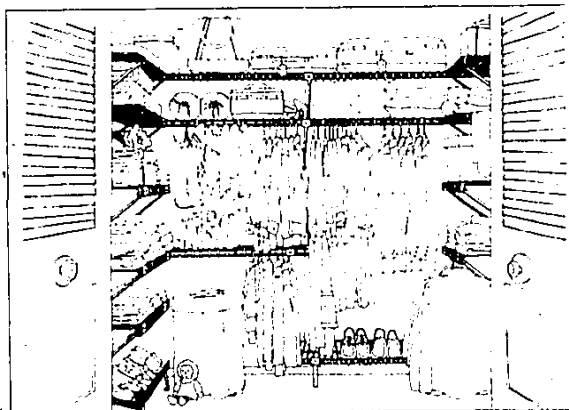
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