

Hand Pollinating Gourds

Gourd flowering began here at the Sullivan Farm in early July and continues on a full size scale now. It has kept us busy for the entire month doing hand pollinations for our IGS Pure Seed Project. I spend a period of time the majority of afternoons and then again evenings from dusk to sunset.

In the afternoons we locate female and matching male blooms that should open around dusk that day. Those found are tied closed using twisty ties to make sure they remain isolated. In the evenings near dusk when flowers would naturally open we return to do hand pollinating. Those earlier selected male and female flowers on the same plant are untied and the male is used to apply pollen to the female. The female flower is tied closed again and a marker attached to the stem to identify the resulting gourd as a hand pollinated one. These will produce seed for a next generation of pure seed for our IGS Pure Seed Project.

How many this year? A bunch. Here on my farm there are 22 plots of different varieties. Plots contain from one to 3 or 4 plants each. I strive for at

least two hand pollinated gourds on each plant. We expected and do find some unsuccessful crosses that abort soon after pollination. And, some off types may develop that will be discarded from the program. From the good ones we will at the end of the season select the best for desired qualities like true-ness to type, shell thickness and density, appropriate maturity time, and disease resistance. We'll save seed stock from these for future generations with excess seed going to IGS for seed sales.

Now that July is ending I'll conclude strong effort to do pollinating. Why stop now? I count on gourds that set on by the end of July around here to produce fully mature gourds containing good seed by the end of the season - - whenever frost declares the season ended.

In addition to my at home efforts other cooperating growers will add to the next generation of pure seed gourds. Guy Shut, Sid Meyers, Ida Kennedy, Fran Bascom, Connie McCullom and my neighbor Andy Miller have taken and are growing qualified plants or assigned them to friends who have offered plots spaces.

Good gourdng to all.

Steve Sullivan

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