

## Gourd Maturity Test 101

*By Pat Moore*

When harvesting your gourd crop in the fall, do this simple test to tell if a gourd is mature and will dry or rot over the winter. This test is good for both Hardshell and Ornamental Gourds.

### Test:

Using your thumbnail somewhere near the bottom of gourd, try to push straight into the gourd. Now look at what happened.

### Results:

**1) If your nail CAN puncture** the skin and meat of the gourd:

- a) It **is not mature** and most likely will rot eventually.
- b) But, you can probably use it for holiday decorations until it starts to rot.

**2) If your nail CAN NOT puncture** into the gourd shell or only scratches the skin:

- a) It **is mature** and mostly will dry over the winter.
- b) Use the gourd for holiday decoration, and then let it dry outside, over winter. When dry you can clean and craft it.

### FYI:

1. If your thumbnail has punctured/scratched the skin, only....no big deal, it may become a blemish, or not.
2. If your nail went into the meat of the gourd....the gourd is not mature. Poking it will not have caused any problems, it was not mature anyway, and most likely will not survive.
3. Depending where you live, and how soon killing cold weather gets here, your nearly mature gourds might make it.
4. Do this test at end of growing season or mid-November.
5. Your thumbnail mark is like a bug bite to the gourd. One bite is not going to hurt/kill the gourd.
6. If the gourd is still growing, it is not mature.
7. By October, most gourds are as mature as they are going to be. A dry, brown stem is a good indicator that the gourd is mature. Best bet now is to wait and see what happens. Hope for a late freeze. When harvested, put on a pallet or something to hold the gourds off the ground outside, and see what happens to them.