

## Small Area Gourdening

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Gourds by nature have fairly long vines and require a lot of room to grow if left to roam all over the ground. Vines can grow 6' to 30' long and sometimes even longer on some varieties.

The smaller varieties of hardshell gourds, and generally all the ornamental gourds, can be grown and kept inside of an area 5' x 5', if a wire cage is used. A cage can be made from old farm fence, concrete reinforcement wire, or other fencing to create your own design. Use at least 1 or more strong sturdy stakes to hold the cage in place. Try to choose a wire that has at least 4"X 4" openings in it for easy access for your hands, and at least 4' in height. A manufactured round cage works equally as well. Most types of these wire panels and cages can be purchased at your local hardware, farm supply, lumberyard, department, and garden stores.

The seeds can be sown in an area approximately 1-1/2' x 1-1/2', usually at least 6 plants and sometimes more in real fertile soil. After your plants are growing good, and start to vine out, set the wire cage around them. As they continue to vine out and grow, start weaving the vines "in and out" and "around" the wire, with all vines going in the same direction (clockwise or counter-clockwise). start weaving the vine approximately 1/2' to 1' above the ground, and take your time working your way up to the top and then back down, if necessary. Try to weave when the temperature is fairly warm and do not weave tightly.

Also, for small area gourdening, a 5 gallon bucket filled with good soil, can be used setting on the patio. Make sure that the bucket has plenty of drainage holes, or is possibly even cracked in the bottom. This may require a taller wire cage due to the height of the bucket. At least one strong sturdy stake should be used to hold the cage.

Gourds actually seem to do better on these wire cages than they do roaming on the ground. The blooms are up and out in the open where they can be spotted by the bees and the other insects who pollinate them. The quality of the gourd also seems better. They will not have the marks on them from sitting on the ground. However, you may get some wire marks on them from resting against the wires. Yield also seems to be higher.

These wire cage methods work really well for gardeners who have limited space and also for those wanting large yields who have small gardens. It has been known to yield as many as 500 ornamental gourds in an area as small as 15' X 25' (less than 400 sq. ft) with 8 to 10 cages.

This information is of my own knowledge and experiences: For more information on gourds and gourd events, contact the Indiana Gourd Society.