

The Amendment

K A S S E N H O F F G R O W E R S

THE SQUASH FAMILY

also known as the CUCURBIT family:

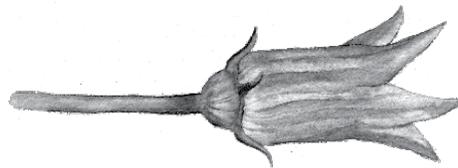
Cucumbers, zucchinis, summer squash, winter squash, pumpkins, melons etc.

SEX ED 101

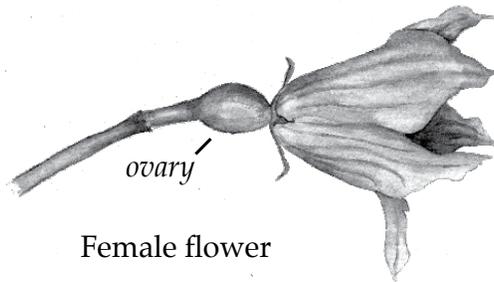
Sometimes customers report that they have lovely lush squash or cucumber plants but they get a small harvest. They say that there are small fruits that form but then they rot and fall off.

The problem is one of pollination. The 'small fruits' that form are really just ovaries that will not form real fruits until they are pollinated. They form under the female flower and will only turn into a fruit if they are pollinated by the pollen from a male flower. Now this pollen can come from a male flower on the same plant or from any other male flower of a plant in the cucurbit family. All it takes is a bee or another insect to roll around in a male flower and then do the same in the female flower.

Sometimes, because of cultural conditions, your plant won't produce male and female flowers that are open at the same time. Or maybe you only want to grow one plant or you don't have the right pollinators in your garden. Don't despair. You can have a hand in this pollination business. First, identify the male and female flowers.



Male flower



Female flower

Second, pick a male flower and gently rub the center of it on the centre of a female flower or flowers. You can use one male to pollinate a few females. Remember, it can be from any plant in the cucurbit family. Third, take the used male flower to the kitchen and stuff with ricotta cheese, bread it and pan fry. But seriously, if you are going to make stuffed squash blossoms use the male flowers so you don't reduce your harvest of fruits.

Now you know how to make your cucurbit harvest a record one this year.

SEED SAVING

As you have learned, cucurbits cross-pollinate very easily. This is handy if you want to increase your harvest. Not so handy if you want to save your own seed. The female flower that's pollinated will form the correct variety of fruit. You'll get an Italian zucchini even if the pollen came from a yellow crookneck squash male flower. If you were to save the seed and grow it out next year however, you probably would get something quite different.

You will need to leave the fruits on the plants until the seeds are fully formed and ripe. This is beyond eating quality. It can be fun to grow out these crosses. Join the centuries old tradition of plant selection!

Check out our website — www.kassenhoffgrowers.com and join our email list for the latest news about when we'll be where and upcoming events.

Happy gardening!
Peggy & Helen

