

Common Name: **Gourd**

Genus: *Lagenaria*

Species: (varies)

Family: Cucurbitaceae

AKA: None found

Historical Uses:



Medical: “The juice being dropped into eares with oyle of roses is good for the paine thereof proceeding of a hot cause. The pulpe or meate mitigateth all hot swellings, if it be laid theron in a manner of a pultise, and being used in this manner it taketh away the head-ache and inflammation of the eyes. The seed allayeth the sharpness of urine, and bringeth down the same.”(1)

Household: Gourds, when dried were made into an assortment of useful devices including bowls, plates, containers for fluids, dippers, and watering scoops.

Folklore/Astrology: “The meate or inner pulpe of the gourd is of temperature cold and moist, and that is in the second degree.” (2)

Varieties:

L. siceraria= Calabash, Bottle Gourd

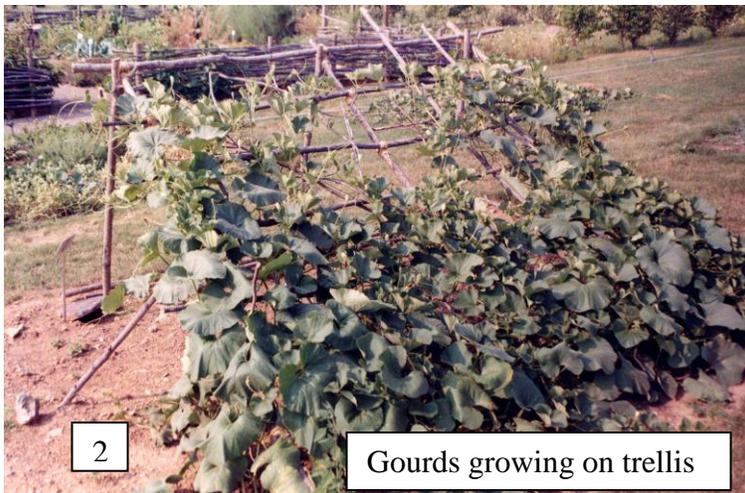
L. longissima= Hercules Club

Trichosanthes cucumerina= Snake gourd, serpent gourd



Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Fruit



Medicinal: Bottle Gourd-
“Consumption of bottle gourd juice on an empty stomach, first thing in the morning; is beneficial to reduce weight. It has a high fiber content and thus useful in regulation of bowel movements. It prevents excessive loss of sodium from the body. It also helps in controlling excessive thirst in diarrhea, diabetes, and consumption

of food rich in fatty acids and oils.

It helps to reduce acidity of urine and can be used to cure urine infections and acidic urine. If you are on a low calorie diet eating bottle gourd is a must as it is high in fibre and low in calories. Due to its high fibre content it can be used to prevent gastrointestinal disorders, constipation, piles, ulcers etc. It acts as a diuretic and calms you down after consumption.

It helps cleanse your system.

It has been used to treat epilepsy and other mental ailments.

It is useful in controlling blood pressure and diabetes.”(3)

Culinary: Used in Indian and Asia and South American cooking.

Other: Still used to make bowls and other household utensils. Can also be fashioned into musical instruments such as lites, fiddles and drums.

Cautions: “Like other members of the Cucurbitaceae family, calabashes contain cucurbitacins that are known to be cytotoxic. The tetracyclic triterpenoid cucurbitacins present in fruits and vegetables of the cucumber

family, are responsible for the bitter taste, and can cause ulcers in the stomach. In extreme cases, people have died from drinking calabash juice.”(4)



Bowls made from gourds above, container and dipper below



Area of Origin: Sub-continent, southern Africa

Physical description: Climbing vine

Plant type: Annual

Height: Varies

Flower color: White

Flowering period: Summer

Soil type/requirements: Rich, well-drained soil

Fruit: Size and shapes vary depending on species

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: Propagated by seed sown in May/June

Sources

1. Gerard, p. 923-924
2. Ibid
3. Pradesh, Madhya. "Cultivation of the Bottle Gourd." 12, April 2010
4. Wikipedia contributors. "Calabash." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 16 Jul. 2012. Web. 18 Jul. 2012.

Illustrations/Images:

1. Schoffer's Herbal 1485
2. PSUMG 2005
3. PSUMG 2012
4. PSUMG 2012