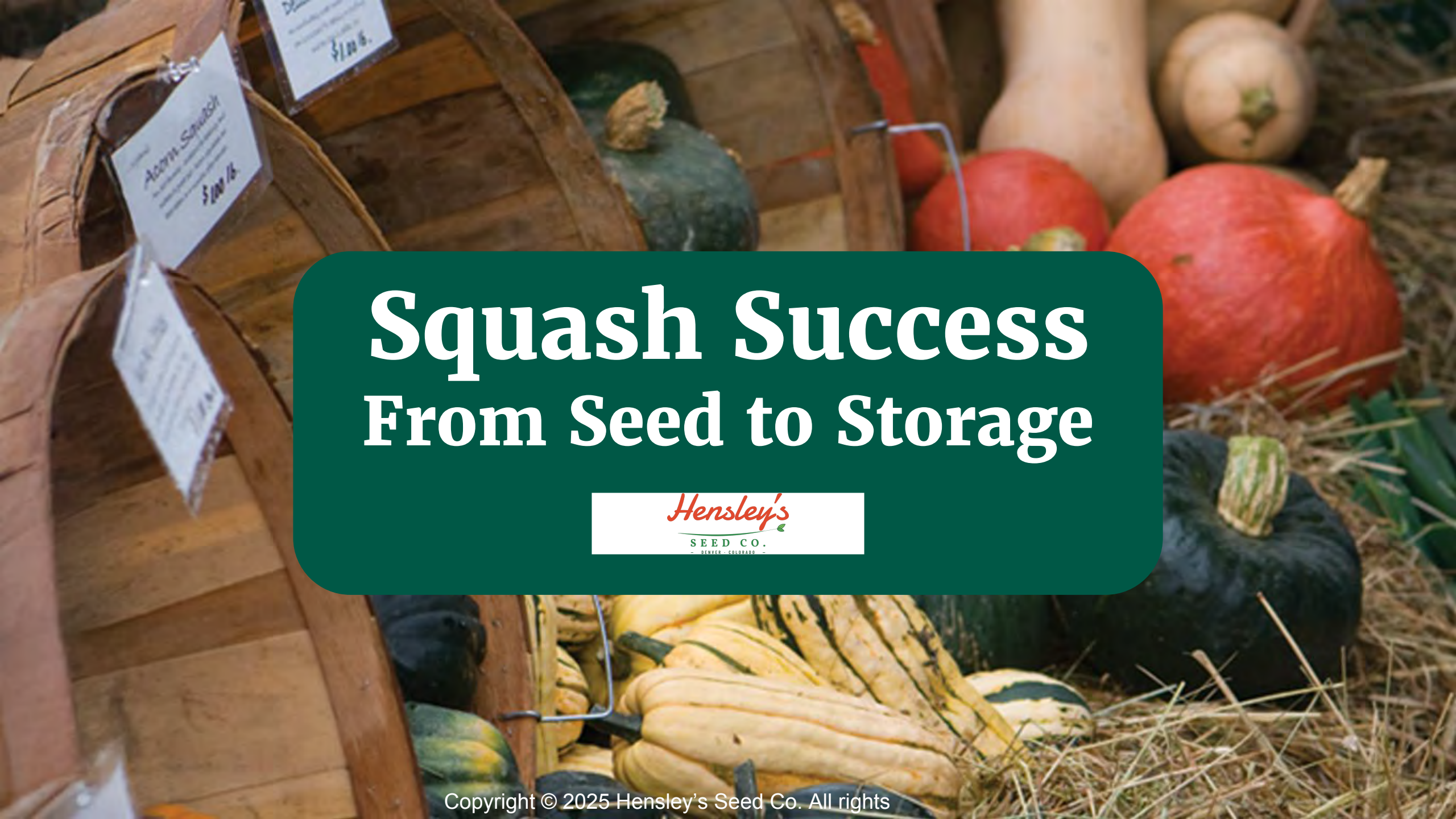


Squash Success
From Seed to Storage

Hensley's SEED CO. DENVER · COLORADO

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Our Research Farm

Trial site in USDA zone 5b

- **200+ Acres Managed**
- **11 Farm Sites**
- **94 Acres Consisting of:**
  - **Seed Production—8 acres**
  - **Variety Trials—15 acres**
  - **Breeding Program—21 acres**
  - **Cover Crops—50 acres**



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Breeding Program 2024 Stats

145,331 Plants Grown Our Breeding Program

1,232 Taste Tests

4,855 Hand Pollinations



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PRESENTED BY THE HENSLEY'S TEAM

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Overview

- Intro to the original source Squash **Breeding Program**
- **History of Our Program**
- **Insight into our Breeding Process**
- **Types & Species of Winter & Summer Squash**
- **Highlights of our squash lineup**
- **Harvest and storage tips for winter squash**

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Original-source Squash

Breeding Program

- Work on diverse types of squash and pumpkins
- Primarily use pedigree selection and develop hybrids (traditional plant breeding methods)
- Low-input/organic conditions
- Breeding team
  - Breeder
  - Technicians

  - Pollination crew



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A Little History

Winter Squash & Pumpkins

- First plant breeding program at the original source – about 50 years old!
- Started by a breeder

Summer squash

- Primarily bred by the breeding team

2015 Transition

- A new breeder started at the source and took over breeding all 3 crops



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Insight Into Our Breeding Process







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Making Pollinations







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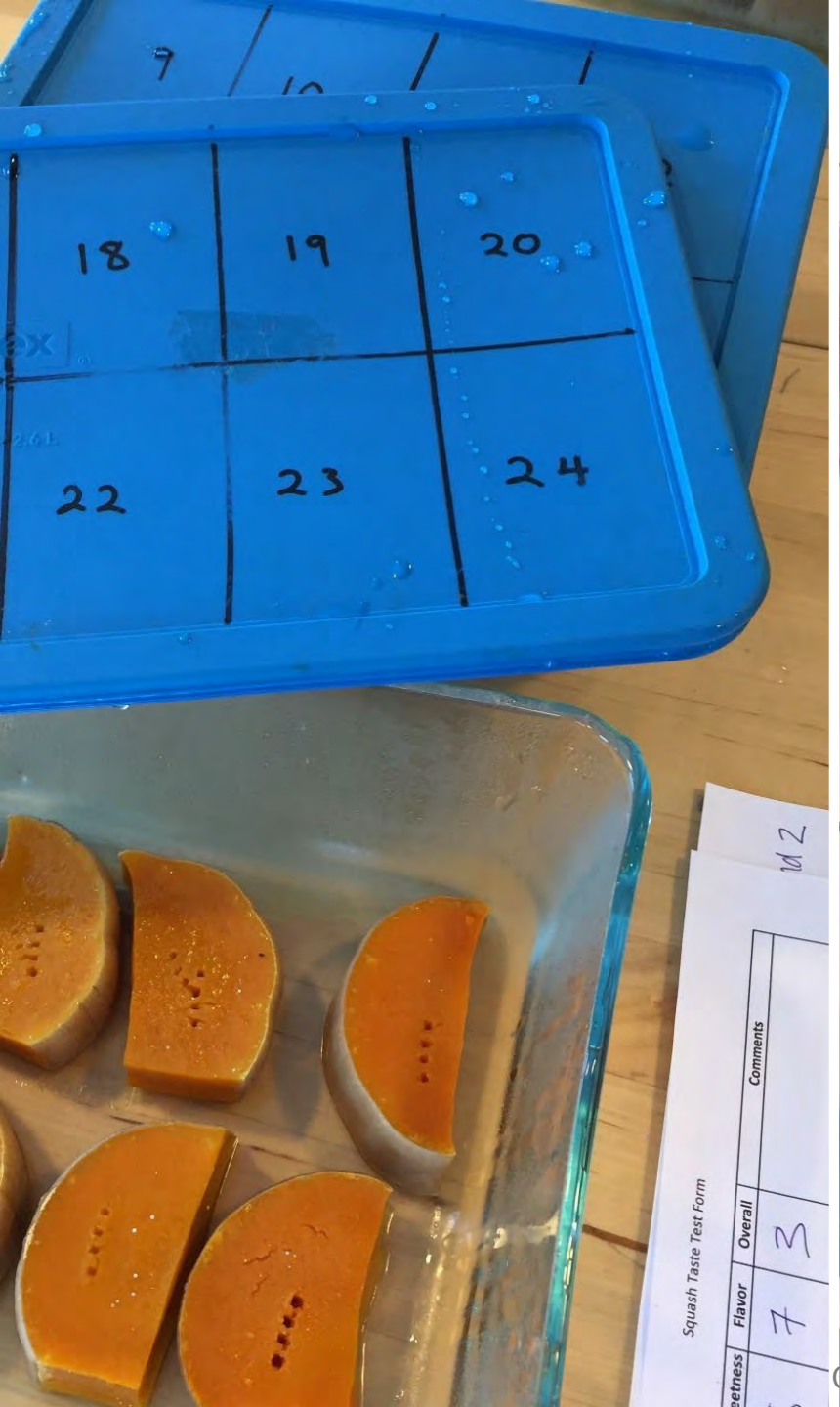








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Squash Types & Species

- **Summer squash**
- **Winter squash**
  - *Cucurbita pepo*
  - *Cucurbita moschata*
  - *Cucurbita maxima*
- **Pumpkin**



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Summer Squash

- *Cucurbita pepo*
- Flowers earliest; harvest and eat the immature fruit







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Winter Squash – *Cucurbita pepo*







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Winter Squash – *Cucurbita moschata*







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Winter Squash – *Cucurbita maxima*







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Pumpkins

- Mostly *Cucurbita pepo*, but some *Cucurbita maxima*
- Pumpkin = shape (not a different species)









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Original-source Bred

Squash Varieties



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Winter Squash: Pepo

Starry Night PMR

Organic (F1) Acorn Squash. 95 days

- **Superior eating quality** compared to a typical acorn squash
- **Better storage** than a typical acorn as well
  - Maintains eating quality later into the winter
- Easy to recognize for its **unique, pixelated color pattern**
  - Also a ripeness indicator
- **Vigorous bush habit**
  - Can be planted on more compact spacing compared to a vining type
  - More upright plants keep first flush of fruit off the ground or on mulch
  - Holds up well to Powdery Mildew



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Winter Squash: Pepo

Night Shift

Organic (F1) Acorn Squash. 95 days

- **Superior eating quality** compared to a typical acorn squash
- **Better storage** than a typical acorn
  - o **Maintains eating quality** later into the winter
- **Vine habit**
  - o More plant means more sugars
  - o Large plants can help smother weeds
  - o Higher yield per plant compared to bush-types
  - o Holds up well to Powdery Mildew



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Winter Squash: Pepo

Delicata JS

Organic (OP) Delicata Squash. 100 days

- Has gained a lot of popularity over the years for its **flavor straight out of the field, edible skin**, and general **ease of processing** in the kitchen
- There are many Delicata strains on the market- this one is ours
    - Selected for uniformity, yield, and of course, flavor!



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Winter Squash: Pepo

Honey Bun

(F1) Acorn Squash. 95 days

- A **dramatic improvement** in the "Sweet Dumpling" class
- **High yielding and uniform**, with great flavor and sweetness and good storability
- Fruits turn caramelly-bronze at peak ripeness—**easy to know when it's time to eat them**



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Winter Squash: Maxima

Sunshine

Organic (F1) Kabocha Squash. 95 days

- A true classic
- **Bred by a breeder** over 20 years ago, and still one of our most popular squash
- **Great color, great appearance, great yields**
- **Can be eaten right at maturity**, without waiting for the squash to fully mature in storage
- Not the best for long-term storage



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Winter Squash: Maxima

Sweet Jade

Organic (F1) Kabocha Squash. 95 days

- **A hidden gem** of the squash assortment
- **Delicious personal-size kabocha**
  - Sized perfectly for single servings, soup bowls, and more, with little to no wasted fruit
- **Heavy yields and exceptional storage**



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Winter Squash: Maxima

Marmalade

Organic (F1) Kabocha Squash. 100 days

- One of my personal favorites
- **High yielding**
- Combines **bright color and earliness** with **excellent storage and eating quality**



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Winter Squash: Maxima

Winter Sweet

Organic (F1) Kabocha Squash. 95 days

- Our best tasting winter squash (*in my humble opinion*)
    - Nice **balance of sweetness and flavor**
    - Perfect **flaky, creamy texture**
- **Stores like a rock**
- Needs to **mature in storage for around 2 months** before you can start eating it



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Winter Squash: Maxima

Winter Blush

Organic (F1) Kabocha Squash. 95 days

- Pink accompaniment to Winter Sweet
- **Similar storability** and **eating quality** in a different color
- Fruits are **pale pink at harvest**, with **variable levels of sky blue** in a star shape on the blossom end which **fades to solid pink in storage**.



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Winter Squash: Maxima

Mambo

Organic (F1Kabocha Squash. 95 days

- One of our newest introductions
- Standard green Kabocha but with **a little more versatility**
    - Classic blocky buttercup shape but with **no significant "button"** on the blossom end.
    - **Can be marketed as a buttercup or a kabocha**
- Beyond its appearance, it ticks all the other boxes: **high yielding, uniform, and delicious**



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Winter Squash: Moschata

Block Party

Organic (F1) Butternut Squash. 100 days

- Our other newest winter squash
- Lovingly referred to as ‘Miracle' and ‘Saint Butternut' in our breeding nursery—it was just too good to be true.
    - Both its **yield and storage** results are **unbelievably high without compromising on flavor**.
- We named it ‘Block Party' for its **compact blocky shape—a great efficiency** when packing CSA boxes.
    - Its thick neck means **less waste** when preparing or processing and it has a **good flesh-to-seed-cavity ratio**.



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Winter Squash: Moschata

Butterscotch

Organic (F1) Butternut Squash. 100 days

- **Our best-tasting butternut**
  - Sweet and creamy, with excellent flavor
- **Doesn't need to mature in storage** before it can be enjoyed
- **Doesn't store as well as larger butternuts** like Metro or Block Party, but similar to Honeynut and Butterbaby
- Shorter vines can be planted at **tighter spacing**, allowing for **higher yields per acre**



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Winter Squash: Moschata

Waldo PMR

Organic (F1) Butternut Squash. 100 days

- Largest of our hybrid butternuts
- Improved Waltham-type—**More uniform and attractive** without the oversized fruits
    - Produces **big yields with very few culls**
    - Still has **great eating quality**
- **Vigorous plants** and **strong PMR** ensure crops reach maturity under high disease pressure



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Summer Squash: Pepo

Tempest

Organic (F1) Yellow Summer Squash.
54 days

- **Outstanding culinary quality.**
  - **Rich, nutty flavor** and **pleasantly firm texture - less watery** than other summer squash
  - **Retains shape, texture, and color** through a multitude of cooking methods
- **Open plant habit** and **soft spines** for easy harvest
- Precocious yellow gene causes **leaves to express yellow color**



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Summer Squash: Pepo

Goldfinch

Organic (F1) Yellow Summer Squash.
50 days

- **Improved plant habit** compared to standard yellow summer squash
    - The **wide-open plant habit** and **medium spines** make for easier harvests
    - **Squash conveniently positioned** along a long central stem
    - **Upright growth** lends itself well to container growing



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Summer Squash: Pepo

Zephyr

(F1) Yellow Summer Squash. 54 days

- **Distinctive appearance and great flavor**
    - Harvest young at 4-6" for **unusually delicious, nutty flavor** and **firm texture**
    - Blossoms bear a **mild, squash-like flavor** and work well in cooked dishes
- Under certain stressful situations, such as hot weather, Zephyr **fruits can show some variability** in the amount of green at the blossom ends.
- In addition, sometimes **the first one or two fruits produced** may be green-striped.



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Winter Squash Eating Quality

- **Sugar content**
  - Measured by degrees Brix
- **Starch content**
  - Measured by percent dry matter
- **Finite amount of total carbohydrates** when the squash is harvested
- Then the **balance changes during curing and storage** – like a banana ripens!
- **Flavor also matters** – that's why we taste test



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Winter Squash Harvest Tips



- Let fruit mature – **they'll look ready** before they're **actually** ready
  - Acorn squash is the worst culprit
  - Maximize the amount of carbohydrates the fruit stores
- **Signs they're ready to harvest**
  - 50+ days after the fruit set
  - Rind and stem hardness
  - Color change
- **Don't wait too long, either**
  - Avoid sunburn/sunscald
  - Avoid the fruits being frosted
  - If the plants are dead, go ahead and harvest
- **Be gentle**—squash can scratch and bruise during harvest

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Winter Squash Storage Tips

Curing

After cutting the fruits from the vine, **sun-cure** in the field for 5–7 days, **or cure indoors** for 5–7 days at 80–85°F (27–29°C), in an area with good air ventilation

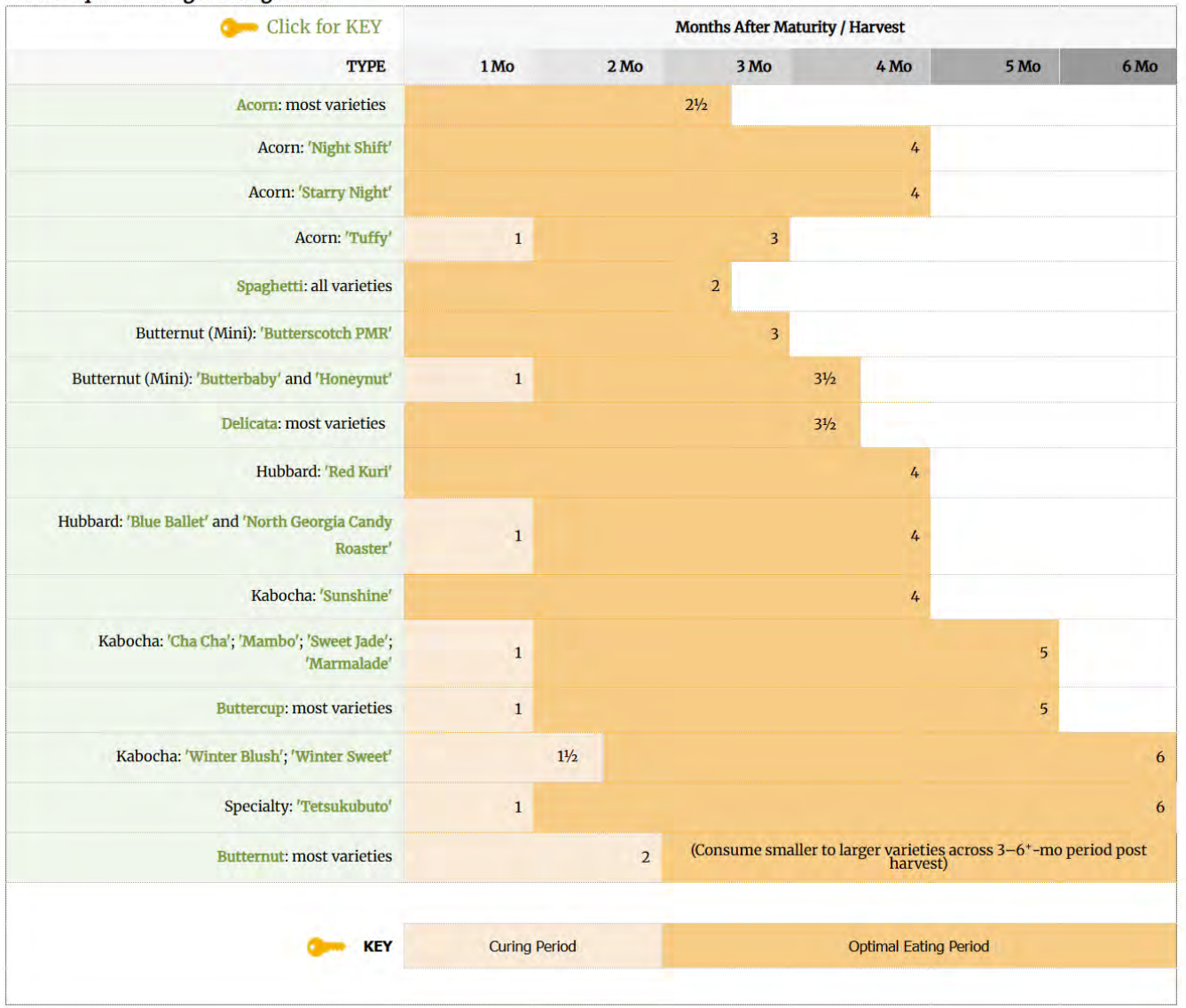
Storage Conditions

- **Cool and dry** – we recommend 55-60°F/12-15°C, 50-70% relative humidity and good ventilation

When to Eat Which Types

- **Earliest** – Delicata, acorn, spaghetti, red kabocha, mini butternuts
- **Medium** – Medium butternuts, green kabochas
- **Latest** – Large butternuts, blue/gray kabocha

Winter Squash Curing & Storage Chart



Original-source Winter Squash Curing & Storage Chart

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RESOURCES

- Browse squash varieties
- Winter Squash Comparison Chart
- Winter Squash Curing & Storage
- Growing resources
- About Our Seeds
- Classical plant breeding

- NE Vegetable Management Guide
- UMinn Ext: Growing pumpkins & winter squash in home gardens
- Cornell Info Sheets:
  - How Do I Know When Winter Squash are Mature?
  - Harvesting & Curing of Pumpkins & Winter Squash

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Thank You

We hope you enjoyed our presentation

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