

Squash, Banana—*Cucurbita maxima* Duch.¹

James M. Stephens²

Banana squash is a member of the winter squash group. It is seldom grown commercially in Florida and is not often found in home gardens, primarily because of its susceptibility to leaf diseases such as powdery and downy mildews.

Description

There are several varieties of banana squash, each differing mainly in skin color. All grow on a large vine having both male and female flowers. ‘Blue Banana’ is blue or slate colored, with medium thick, yellow-orange flesh. The fruits mature in about 105 to 110 days after reaching a length of 20 to 22 inches, a diameter of 6 inches, and a weight of 12 pounds. The surface of the skin is slightly wrinkled.

‘Pink Banana’ is quite similar, except for the skin color, which is a dull deep pink. ‘Orange Banana’ has brilliant orange-colored flesh and exterior. The big one of the bunch is ‘Pink Mammoth Jumbo,’ which reaches a length of 48 inches, a diameter of 12 inches, and a weight of 75 pounds.

Culture

Banana squash, like most winter squash, is best grown in the Florida garden in the spring, except in South Florida where it may be grown from fall through the winter and into spring. Fairly good-sized squashes were grown at Gainesville on vines set out in early September. Plant the seed after the danger of frost has passed. Culture is similar to cantaloupe, with wide row spacing a necessity. The vines become quite lengthy, reaching 20 feet or more. Space plants 42 inches apart and allow a row width of at least 60

inches. Even then, the vines likely will run onto adjacent rows.

In addition to mildew, fruit rots (soil decay) can be troublesome. A mulch barrier on the soil is helpful, but the fruits often form in the row middles. A variety of insect problems could occur such as aphids, squash bugs, and pickleworms. Bees are needed for pollination.



Figure 1. Banana squash.
Credits: James M. Stephens, UF/IFAS

Use

Since banana squash is mature when harvested, its hard rind allows it to be stored for a month or more until eaten. Like other winter squash, it is usually baked in portions, or cooked like pumpkins.

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