

Tennessee Dancing Gourds

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I read an article about an Heirloom Gourd that children used as spinning toys. The term referenced in the article was ‘original Fidget Spinner’. This caught my attention, and I had to have some seeds. This little cutie appears to have been grown in the South since the early 1800s. Thomas Jefferson included a sketch in a letter to his granddaughter and described it as “the minutest gourd ever seen”.

This Cucurbita pepo var. ovifera fell out of popularity, and seeds were hard to find. According to legend, these Dancing gourd seeds were saved and passed along by Mr. Gordon of Primm Springs, Hickman County, TN, in the 20th century. The first pack of seeds that I purchased came from Tennessee. They can now be acquired from many Heirloom Seed companies.

Gourds come in all shapes and sizes and have many uses (birdhouses and bowls, to name a few). But as a TOY which has turned into competitions in Tennessee? That is awesome!

The vines stay nice and tidy on an A-frame netted trellis. Just make sure to keep training them as they grow. Don’t allow them to trail on the ground as insects will likely damage them.

I dug a little deeper (gardening pun) and found a 2024 video by Songbird Jones, and I was HOOKED!

I have linked to the video here. Enjoy!

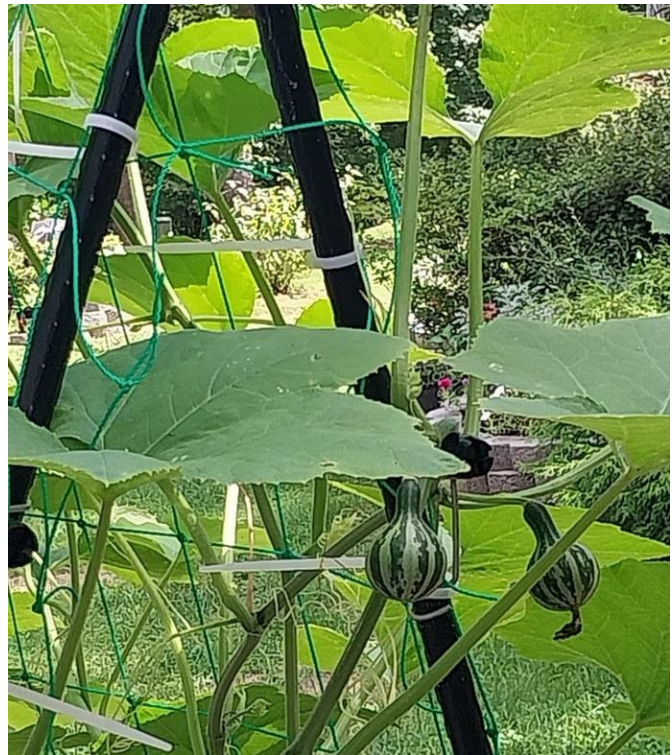


Photo by Karen Woodring

References:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKKR7iBRsd0>

<https://utgardens.tennessee.edu/july-2017-plant-of-the-month-tennessee-dancing-gourd/>

<https://exchangeplacetn.org/?p=7138>