**How to Start a Gourd Patch in Your Area**

(Ideas compiled by Sue Brown in Sarasota, Florida, 2002)   
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Good luck and have fun!!!

This information was developed to help folks get Gourdpatches going in Florida, and to give ideas as to what organizers have done in the way of "getting going". It is not really hard to do ... if you know a few folks already interested in gourding, you have a potential group that will grow as the word spreads.

The first couple of meetings take some time and effort to plan and carry off, but it is well worth it. Then when you get some input from the group as to future meeting ideas, you are off and running. Gourders are wonderful folks and love to share what they have done and know how to do.

This information is intended to give you some ideas and get you started in organizing your efforts. Some folks love detail, others are a little looser, so do whatever works for you and your group. Above all have fun and look forward to making some wonderful new friends. Information below includes:

* Starting A Gourdpatch In 10 Easy Steps
* Meeting Ideas
* Sample Meeting Agendas
* Sample Initial Contact Letter
* Sample Promotional Poster

**A New Gourdpatch in Ten Easy Steps** *-- Suggestions by A.B. Amis 11/19/01*

1. **COMMIT - AND THEN MAKE IT HAPPEN**

Select a regular periodic meeting time and location that will be convenient for YOU, because YOUR presence and dedication are going to be key until the new patch is more or less able to stand on its own feet.

* You can consider changing the time and location to accommodate your members' preferences later, if need be, after you have established a sizable and stable membership.
* Free meeting rooms are typically available at libraries, bookstores, craft stores, etc.- all you have to do is ask. You may be asked to sign some paperwork, agreeing to be personably responsible for seeing to it that the facility's policies are observed relative to clean-up, non-discrimination, liability for damage, etc.

Preferably, find one or two other individuals willing to work with you in getting the patch started, because misery loves company, and there will probably be some initial disappointments as people you contact profess interest, but then don't show up for meetings.

1. **PUBLICIZE THE MEETINGS**

Develop an initial mailing/telephone list of people in your area whom you think might be interested in participating in a gourdpatch

* Send them postcards or letters a few weeks in advance of a planned first meeting, and then maybe follow this up with phone reminders shortly before the meeting.
* Get announcement of meetings in the "Weekly Calendar" section of your local newspaper/TV.
* Perhaps place meeting notices placed in craft stores, plant nurseries, etc.
* Encourage folks to bring a friend

Notes:

* Ask participants to bring their own gourds, supplies, and tools if they have them, but note in the publicity that gourds, supplies, and tools will be available at the meeting for those who can't bring their own.
* Have name badge blanks and a sign-in sheet on a table near the door.
* Ask everyone who attends your meetings to place their names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses on the sign-in sheet
* Use these sheets as a basis for making lists of people to be notified with "reminders" about later meetings, etc.

1. **ARRANGE TO HAVE GOURDS AVAILABLE AT ALL THE MEETINGS**   
   The availability of gourds at the meetings is a strong incentive for newbies and luke-warm gourders to attend.

* Do some of your members, or prospective members, grow gourds that they would be willing to bring to the meetings for sale to other members?
* Will others perchance be traveling to gourd shows, or to other places where gourds can be bought in quantity?
* Any kinds of gourds will do fine initially - the members can fit crafting projects to whatever gourds are available to them, and only later, after the patch has grown to the point where specific, pre-planned workshop projects are the norm, should there be much concern about having the "right" kinds of gourds available.

1. **ARRANGE TO HAVE SPECIALIZED GOURD TOOLS/SUPPLIES AT THE MEETINGS**   
   You've probably seen it happen - the first time a person takes one of those mini-jigsaws in his hands and cuts a gourd; she/he's hooked, and can hardly sleep until he owns one!

* So try to have a jigsaw, wood burner, Dremel, sander, your favorite gourd-cleaning tools, etc. at the meetings.
* Paints, leather dyes, inks as well - most people are probably familiar with paints and painting supplies, but the use of dyes & inks is usually an interesting new idea to them.
* Pine needles, basketry reed, seagrass, philodendron sheaths, embellishments, finishing products such as Deft lacquer, Minwax Wipe on Poly, Krylon Fixatif.
* Gourd books, of course.

1. **HAVE A BRAG TABLE WHERE MEMBERS CAN DISPLAY CURRENT PROJECTS**   
   Try to bring work yourself illustrating a variety of Grafting techniques, and encourage everyone to bring their latest creations - no matter how amateurish.

* Brag on all efforts, and offer encouragement.

1. **DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT ORGANIZED PROGRAMS AT FIRST**   
   For the first few meetings, it should be enough just to get together and talk gourds and do "show and tell.”

* Maybe cobble up some simple project on the spot based on whatever gourds and tools are at hand.
* Try having attendees try various crafting techniques on gourd scraps.
* Just publicize the meeting as "Fun With Gourds" or something non-committal like that..

1. **HAVE LITERATURE AVAILABLE AT MEETINGS. AND** [**SIGN UP**](http://americangourdsociety.org/Gourdpatch.html) **MEMBERS**   
   Look on the AGS website and Chapter sites for informative brochures.

* For example, FGS Membership Brochures, "Fact Sheets for Florida Gourders", "How We Grow Gourds in Florida", copies of past Gourdvine newsletters, etc.
* Make it easy for new members to [join](http://americangourdsociety.org/Gourdpatch.html) your group and the AGS by assisting them in filling out the membership form

1. **SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN "OUTSIDE" ACTIVITIES**   
   Spread the word about gourds.

* Be alert to opportunities for doing gourd programs for local Garden Clubs, educational or artistic gourd exhibits in library showcase windows, etc. - anything to increase local public awareness of our gourd hobby.

1. **WRITE MONTHLY PATCH REPORTS FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER**   
   Brag on members and member accomplishments - everyone likes recognition!
2. **FISCAL MATTERS**   
   If you have “overhead” expenses you will need to raise some funds.

* Consider having members pay dues
* Obtaining and selling raw (unfinished) gourds, gourd art, supplies with a small profit to benefit the group
* Teaching a program where an honorarium is offered

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| **SOME GOURDPATCH MEETING IDEAS:** | |
| * Tool clinic (woodburning, mini jigsaw, dremel, etc) * Cutting gourds with a dremel tool * Patching gourds * Paint a penguin gourd * Laying out and woodburning an egg gourd * Chip carving demonstration * Pine needle coiled tops on prepared gourd bowls * Teneriffe design on prepared gourd bowl * Gourd purse * Rainstick with a snake gourd * Decoupage fabric and photos on a gourd | * Pen and ink (done on paper) * Visit to a new gourd farm * Dream catchers on a gourd * Philodendron sheaves on a gourd bowl top * Gourd bird house * Realistic apple gourd painting * Chicken created using Paper Clay * Crackling on a gourd without crackle medium * Gourd snowman * Gourd mask * Relief carving on a gourd * One stroke painting on a gourd |

**SAMPLE GOURDPATCH MEETING AGENDA**

Set –up the Meeting Room with the following

1. Sign-in table with prepared sheet to collect name, address, email, phone; name tags
2. Sampling of gourds, tools & supplies
3. Books of interest (List & some on front table)
4. Relevant handouts if available
   1. Internet sites of interest
   2. Gourd Growing and Cleaning tips
   3. Resources (seeds, raw gourds, tools)

**Meet and greet as people arrive**

Agenda

1. Welcome attendees and briefly explain how we got to “today”
2. Introductions: Have folks introduce themselves (your name, town, how you first got into gourds)
3. Discuss various topics, including
4. Information on tools, techniques
5. Where to purchase dried gourds
6. Future meeting dates, times & locations
7. Handout a Technique questionnaire for attendees fill out
   1. Discuss future program ideas....... ask for ideas.
8. Ask for help in running this patch: Things that people can help with:
   1. Set up and cleanup at meetings
   2. Phone and or mailings/emails to stay in touch
   3. Publicity....newspapers, contacting groups about our meetings
   4. Getting gourds/supplies for programs
   5. Program committee
9. Conclude the meeting with the following suggestions
   1. Bring something for Show & Tell
   2. Bring a friend
   3. Bring a favorite crafting book
   4. Collect the techniques survey and report the results at the next gathering or by email after this meeting
   5. Please help clean up the room so we can leave it the way we found it.

 

**Sample Initial Contact Letter**

January 9, 2002

Dear Fellow Gourders,

I have talked with or learned of you within the last year in regards to your interest in Gourds and Gourding. "Somehow" I became responsible for trying to get a gourd group, known as a GOURDPATCH going here in the Sarasota area. Now that the holidays are over, perhaps we can get in gear. So I have taken the bull by the horns and scheduled an initial meeting, just one week from now. I apologize for the short notice!!!

The purpose of this first meeting is to:

* Get to meet other folks in the area with similar interests
* Show the others some of the gourds you have crafted, and see what others have done.
* See gourding tools and books helpful in our craft ( bring any along you might have)
* Get ideas as to what we'd like to do as a group: demonstrations you'd like to see; group projects we could do in a meeting time ( mask, decorative rim, learn foiling, etc.)
* To learn more about the Florida Gourd Society and the upcoming Florida Gourd Show in Belleview (Feb 22-24) (possibly pre -order special types of gourds those of us going could procure)
* See a video of the past Florida Gourd Show and/or a video on making a gourd mask

This meeting will be as successful as we make it!! So bring enthusiasm, curiosity, decorated gourds, gourd or other art books you find motivational.

PLEASE CALL ME.... and let me know you can come or not, or if another time would be more suitable for you in the future. We're just starting from scratch, so we can do whatever we decide works!

Spread the Word---------Bring a Friend

Your Name, Phone Number, Email Address

**Sample Promotional Poster**

\*\* Post wherever you find interested folks: craft fairs, county fairs, garden clubs, craft stores

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| **SARASOTA GOURDPATCH**  LOOKING FOR A NEW HOBBY OR CRAFT ?  A NEW GROUP IS FORMing IN OUR   AREA TO SHARE THE GOURDGLOW !!  VISITORS, NEWBIES AND CURIOUS WELCOME.   NO EXPERIENCE NOR TALENT NEEDED!  ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~  **Who:** Men and women looking for a new hobby.  **What:** Area GOURD crafters meet to share their current   projects and learn new crafting techniques.  **Where:** ((LOCATION))  **When:**((Day of the month and times))  **What to do:** Contact \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Phone:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_email:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  (associated with the Florida Gourd Society) |