

Tying a Knot in a Gourd

By Glenn Burkhalter

Materials Needed:

1. Fence, trellis, arbor or other substantial structure
2. Extra long handle dipper seeds
3. Partial to full sun
4. Space for at least one or two vines to grow
5. Patience and determination to succeed

Heat and humidity are equally important in knot tying. In the absence of humidity, you might try spraying or misting water on the gourd prior to and while working with it. Hand pollination will help insure the gourd has been pollinated. Without pollination, the baby gourd will turn dark and fall off within two or three weeks.



First day: (This will be the third day after pollination). Carefully break the petals and cup from the blossom end of the baby gourd. This shortens the length of the gourd and makes it slightly easier to maneuver the bowl through the loop you will create on the second day. Lay the gourd over a portion of the vine, leaf petal or support that the vine is growing on. Quit for the day.

Second day: When heat and humidity is highest, carefully bend the baby gourd and stem into a loop or O shape. It will have already started this process from having been laid over something the previous day, as gravity will have started the curve. Be careful not to “force” the bend or create a sharp curve. Start the bowl of the gourd through the loop and quit for the day.

Third day: (high heat and humidity) Using all of the neck and stem, slowly maneuver the bowl through the loop and work it down until most of the bowl and neck is in the knot. Quit for the day.

Forth day: Maneuver the bowl and neck further through the loop until the stem is no longer a part of the knot. You must get the stem out of the knot or the knot will remain partially in the neck/stem loop. Quit for the day.

Fifth day: If you were unable to get the stem completely out of the loop on the fourth day, you may be able to maneuver it a little bit further and complete the process, but by the fifth day, the little gourd is getting pretty stiff, so at this point, it’s best not to do much more manipulation. If you were successful in getting the stem out of the knot, the knot will locate itself somewhere in the neck as it continues to grow.

Now, all you have to do is love, nourish and protect your baby for the rest of the summer. Be sure to tie the stem to your support structure. As the gourd grows and gets heavier, a stiff wind can cause it to break loose at the juncture of stem and vine. I cut hundreds of pairs of old panty hose into strips for gourd manipulation in the 16 years I grew and manipulated gourd