

Four Warm-Season Veggies For Your Parrot

Plant these warm-season crops to enjoy with your bird

By Crystal Apilado

We showed you five cool-season crops to grow in your garden in the November 2007 issue of BIRD TALK magazine. Here are four warm-season crops to consider for your garden.

Before You Plant

Warm season crops are best planted in late spring. They require temperatures above 60 degrees Fahrenheit to thrive in. Wait until the last frost in your area has passed before you begin planting or transplanting these crops. These crops do not tolerate extreme cold and they may be damaged if exposed to cold temperatures. Check the USDA Plant Hardiness Map to find out your region's hardiness zone and average annual minimal temperature range.

Sweet Pepper (Bell Pepper) Capsicum annuum

Nutritional Value: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, Potassium

Planting Tips: Plant seeds mid-April through early June. Sweet peppers are best started indoors and then transplanted outside after the last frost date for your area. Place seedlings 18 to 24 inches apart. Sweet peppers require a lot of direct sunlight to grow healthy.

Basic Care: Sweet pepper plants prefer moist soil. Add mulch around the peppers to help retain moisture. Sweet peppers can be harvested as soon as they reach a size that is edible. Continuous harvesting will encourage your plant to produce more peppers, and you may get a fall crop from your sweet pepper plants.

Serve To Your Bird: Wash and chop the sweet pepper. Place it on a kabob for a fun treat for your bird.

Hot Pepper (Chili Pepper) Capsicum baccatum

Nutritional Value: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, Potassium

Planting Tips: Plant seeds mid-April through early June. Hot peppers can be started from seeds or started indoors and transplanted outdoors. However, don't plant in your outside garden until after the last frost date for your area. Place seeds 1 ½ to 2 feet apart.

Basic Care: Hot pepper plants require good air circulation, sunlight and moist soil. As your plant begins to grow, support it with garden twine tied horizontally around slender wooden stakes situated around the plant. As they begin to mature, harvest your hot peppers by cutting them off with hand clippers or scissors. Depending on the type of pepper you have planted, you can begin to harvest them while they are green. Hot peppers turn red when fully ripe.

Serve To Your Bird: Wash and dice your hot peppers, and add them to your bird's favorite birdie bread recipe.

Pumpkin Cucurbita pepo

Nutritional Value: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Iron

Planting Tips: Plant pumpkin seeds in late May to early June. You'll need about 50 to 100 square feet to grow pumpkins in your yard. Plant four to five seeds per a planting hill, in rows that are 10 to 15 feet apart.

Basic Care: As seedlings mature, thin to two or three strong plants per planting hill. Pull weeds from around the plants and use a hoe between rows. Pumpkins can be harvested when they are a deep, solid orange color and the rind is hard. Cut pumpkins from the vines using pruning shears or a sharp knife. Leave around 3 to 4 inches of the stem attached.

Serve To Your Bird: Peel off the hard skin and chop up into cubes. Boil pumpkin cubes and let cool. Serve the soft, warm cubes to your bird. Lightly sprinkle cinnamon or nutmeg on top for a different taste.

Winter Squash (Butternut Squash)
Cucurbita moschata

Nutritional Value: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Potassium

Planting Tips: Plant winter squash seeds in April through July. Plant one to two seeds in rows that are 10 feet apart. There should be about 8 inches between planting hills.

Basic Care: As seedlings mature, thin to a single plant per planting hill. Pull weeds from around the plants and use a hoe between rows. Winter squash can be harvested when the squash has turned a deep solid color and the rind is hard. Harvest your main crop in September or October, before the first frost hits your area. Cut squash from the vines and leave about 2 inches of stem attached.

Serve To Your Bird: Wash and slice squash into strips. Bake in your oven and let strips cool before serving them to your bird.