



The Gourd Book

Charles B. Heiser Jr

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Humankind has had a long and intimate association with gourds, and one of them, the bottle gourd, or calabash, may have been man's first cultivated plant. Although grown in the United States today primarily as ornamentals, in other parts of the world gourds have many other important uses. With charming text and stunning black-and-white photographs, *The Gourd Book* provides fascinating scientific information and folklore about these remarkable plants and keys for identifying species.

The first part of the book deals with tree gourds, widely used as containers and for decoration; the *Cucurbita* gourds, including the buffalo gourd, the Turk's turban, the silver-seed gourd, and the Malabar gourd, all utilized as food, and the beautiful ornamental gourds; the loofah gourds, popular as cosmetic sponges; minor gourds, such as the snake, wax, bitter, teasel, and hedgehog, sometimes used as food or medicine; and gourds mentioned in the Bible.

The second part takes up the bottle gourd, which has been used for thousands of years. Even today this gourd is almost indispensable in many parts of the tropics, where species are used to make containers, musical instruments, and clothing, as food and medicine, and in art. The book concludes with a discussion of the gourd in folklore and myth and an appendix on growing, hybridizing, and preserving gourds for decoration. Delightfully written for general readers, this book will also appeal to botanists, anthropologists, horticulturists, and everyone interested in plants or gardening.

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