

# SAVING CUCURBITS

FROM ATLANTIC GIANT PUMPKINS TO ZUCCHINI

Pumpkin and its relatives, like [watermelon](#), [zucchini](#), [squash](#) and [cucumber](#), are part of the cucurbits plant family, formally known as the *Cucurbitaceae*.

965

Tropical and subtropical species of cucurbits

Distinguished by tendril-bearing vines and characteristic fruits—actually a kind of berry called a “pepo”!

## CUCURBITS ARE THREATENED BY



Climate change



Declining interest in growing them



Loss of genetic diversity as farmers plant fewer varieties

Urgent action to protect cucurbit biodiversity will ensure they will continue to feed us in the future.

## LOCALLY IMPORTANT, GLOBALLY BELOVED

For more than 10,000 years, humans have bred and selected various cucurbits to be sweeter and larger, bitter or not, more brightly colored, and easier to farm, harvest and process.

They're an important source of [carbohydrates](#), [sugars](#), [fiber](#), [antioxidants](#), [minerals](#), [vitamins A and C](#), [protein](#) and [oil](#).

carbs, sugars, fiber, antioxidants

minerals, vitamin A +C,

seeds are a source of protein and oil

## CUCURBITS ARE PART OF THE CULTURE AND HISTORY OF COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The heaviest butternut squash in the world was grown in 2020 in Iowa, USA, and weighed 25.17 kg—that's as much as six cats!

Cucurbits are part of the diet and livelihoods of millions of people.

There's a cucurbit species called loofah, which is used as a scrubbing sponge for cleaning.

## FOR FOOD SECURITY IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

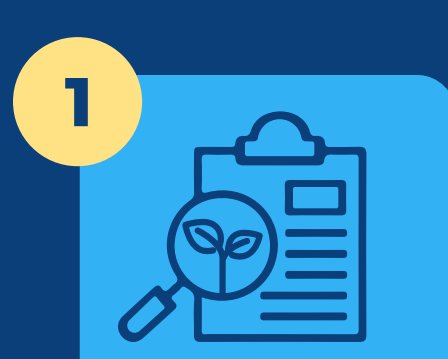
Climate change is putting unprecedented pressures on our ability to grow the food we require. We need improved crop varieties that can withstand these challenges.

To breed those new varieties, scientists need access to plant genetic material, like seeds, that have traits to withstand threats to agriculture.

Conserving cucurbits today in genebanks means that future generations will be able to enjoy their favorite traditions around the crop family, from pumpkin carving to medicinal treatments.

## CONSERVING CUCURBITS TODAY, FOR TOMORROW

Here's how we're making sure cucurbits will always be on the menu. The recipe for a global crop conservation strategy:



**1** A group of experts collect information on the main crops in the cucurbits family to learn their origins, where they're most plentiful in the world, where their wild relatives are, how they're used and how they are being bred.



**2** Genebanks take a look at cucurbits around the world to see which cucurbits are being safeguarded and which ones still need to be collected and conserved.



**3** They come up with a plan of specific actions to guide future collecting and conservation.

The Crop Trust is facilitating the development of the strategies with its partners, like The World Vegetable Center, as well as teams of independent experts, to conserve all kinds of crops around the world. The effort is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) through the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE).

Learn more about the Crop Trust at [croptrust.org](http://croptrust.org).

