

Instructions For Mounting Gourd Canopies



These aluminum gourd canopies can be attached to any gourd, natural or plastic, large or small, painted or unpainted, with just a thick bead of 100% silicone caulking (or its equivalent), the kind that is white and paintable. If you follow the instructions given below, your canopies will attach quickly and permanently.

Surface Preparation: Make sure that the gourds you intend to mount the canopies on are free of dirt, mold, and surface flakes. For natural gourds, lightly sand the areas above the entrance holes where the canopies will be attached. If you are mounting these canopies on gourds that are already painted, you will

want to roughen-up the surface so the caulking will grip tighter. Also, if you plan to submerge a natural gourd in a solution of copper sulfate to preserve it from rot, we suggest you do this *before* the canopies are attached.

Canopy Attachment: Before handling the canopies, you may want to put on a pair of thin work gloves; the edges of the cut metal may be sharp. Please be careful! Position the canopy above the entrance hole of the gourd about 1-1/2" to 2," as shown in the photo. You want to leave this much space above the entrance hole so that martins perched in the entrance holes have plenty of head room and don't have to duck their heads. Placing the canopies more than 2" above the entrance hole will make them less effective against rain. The arc (bend) of the canopy can be tightened or loosened by lightly bending or straightening the canopy. Position the canopy on the gourd in an approximately level (horizontal) position (see photo). Sometimes, depending on the size and curvature of the gourd, changing the arc of the canopy or raising or lowering its position above the hole will cause it to sit in a more horizontal position.

Experiment. In general, tightening the arc of the canopy will raise its slope; straightening it will lower it. The canopies don't have to be mounted horizontally for any biological reason; it's strictly an aesthetic thing. The martins will still use your gourds regardless of whether the canopies slope up or down.

Once you have the canopy in position above the entrance hole and placed the way you want it, trace its outline with a pencil or felt-tipped marker. Don't worry if there are small gaps between the canopy and the gourd - this is normal due to the irregularities in the surface of natural gourds, and to the way the canopies are taper-cut to fit an average-sized gourd. The caulking will take care of gaps. Next, set the canopy aside and apply a 1/2" diameter bead of caulking on top of the entire length of the pencil or pen mark. Once the caulking is applied, press the canopy into the bead as far as it will go, along its entire length. Now, gently smooth the caulking out with your finger or other tool, both above and below the canopy. Allow the caulking to dry for at least 24 hours before proceeding.

Painting Purple Martin Gourds: If you have attached a canopy to an unpainted natural gourd, we recommend that you paint both the gourd and the canopy white. Start by applying a coat of oil-based primer. After it dries, apply a coat of high-quality, oil-based, glossy-white exterior paint. Since the canopies are made of aluminum, they will not rust if left unpainted, but painting is recommended. If you attach these canopies to plastic gourds, painting is optional, but we would recommend it to protect the caulking seal.

Maintenance: These canopies require no maintenance, other than periodic painting at the time the gourds are repainted, every few years. Even though these canopies will help keep out most rain, they will not stop blowing rains. This is why it is important to keep the drainage holes at the bottom of your gourds free of debris and paint at all times.

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GC: 11/06

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