



## Pumpkins

Whether you want to try growing record breaking monster pumpkins or small, sweet ones for pie, all kinds of pumpkins are fairly easy to grow in our area. Pumpkins are another kind of pumpkin so the growing instructions are just the same.

Pumpkins produce huge vines; many are capable of reaching 15 feet or more so plan accordingly. Because they take much longer to mature, and they must mature, they are not edible when young; we typically put out plants here rather than start seeds directly in the garden. Start your pumpkin seeds inside 4-6 weeks ahead of our last frost date. Use peat pots to avoid disturbing the roots when you plant them, pot and all.



If you are growing pumpkins for jack-o-lanterns, select a few pumpkins per vine and cut off all others, plus any new flowers when they appear. Put a board under each one and turn them regularly so they grow nice and round. Snip the tips of the vines off too to encourage the plant to put all its energy into your Halloween pumpkins.

If you are hoping to grow a giant and win the local competition, start by planting seeds bred for monstrous results and start them a good two months before last frost so you put out large plants. Once the vines start to produce pumpkins, cut off all but one and cut off any new flowers that appear. Again, snip the tips off the vines to encourage the plant to focus on your prize specimen. Top dress the vine with a balanced fertilizer every couple weeks including any area where the vine has rooted into the ground. Place a sturdy board (or even a pallet if you plan to grow a true giant) under the chosen fruit.



Pie pumpkins are much smaller and can be harvested up to frost. To make them into pie filling, cut them into pieces and bake them until soft. Scrape the flesh off the peel to make filling.