

8 Easy Tips for Growing Pumpkins!

Nothing says fall like perfect pumpkins. Pumpkins can be turned into delicious pies, a smiling jack-o-lantern, or placed around your home or outdoors for beautiful fall decor. October is the best time to head to the pumpkin patch and pick your perfect pumpkin. For my family, we have a strange tradition of searching for the ugliest pumpkin or gourd. We love the different colors and shapes that pumpkins come in. While orange is the color that pumpkins are famous for, they come in many other colors like white, yellow, and green.

Picking a pumpkin is fun, but growing your own pumpkin plant is better. Growing pumpkins is easy. It is something your whole family can partake in. When you follow a few guidelines you are sure to have success growing your own pumpkins. Here are eight tips to help you grow the perfect pumpkin.

- **Find the Perfect Location**
 - When you plant your pumpkins, make sure you place them in a position that will get a lot of sun and water. Most noteworthy, pumpkins crave damp, compost-enriched soil. Pumpkins love warm soil.
- **Perfect Pumpkins Need Space**
 - Your pumpkin plant needs a lot of space. You will be shocked to see how long the vines of just one pumpkin plant can grow. Check to make sure you are giving your pumpkins enough space to place them on at least a 3-foot diameter mound or hill. Furthermore, place each full size plant five feet from each other. In addition, mini pumpkins, you can place two to three feet apart. If you are planning on growing smaller pumpkins, you can trellis your plants and grow them vertically to help save on space.
- **Good Soil**
 - You want to make sure that the soil is between a pH of 6.0 – 6.8. It is recommended to test your pumpkin's soil each year. If you have noticed that your pumpkin plant is growing a lot of leaves and not flowers, it might be because your soil is high in nitrogen.
- **Water!!**
 - Once you notice your pumpkin plant begin to flower, it will need a lot of water. You want to make sure you get directly to the roots of the pumpkin plant. You want to avoid getting water on the foliage. A great suggestion is to water in the morning so that any water that spaces up on the leaves can dry in the afternoon sun. This will help to avoid fungus. Powdery mildew can slowly kill all the leaves on the vine.
- **Check the Leaves**
 - The vines of your pumpkin plant will be like eyes to the soul of your plant. The foliage will tell you if the pumpkin plant is healthy or not. If you notice the foliage is beginning to wilt in the late morning, that might be a sign to you that your pumpkin plant needs more water.

It is important to know that pumpkins are heavy feeders. Consequently, you want to treat them with manure or compost mixed with water to help to sustain healthy growth. Fertilize your pumpkin plants on a regular basis.

- **Help it Out**

- One way you can help your pumpkin plant grow is by pinching off the fuzzy ends of each vine after a few pumpkins have formed. As a result, the growth of the vine stops and allows the pumpkin plant to place its energy into growing the pumpkin.

In addition, you can prune your pumpkin plant. This will help with space, as well as, help your plant conserve energy to grow fruit. If you are looking to grow a huge, prized winning pumpkin, you can consider only allowing a few promising pumpkins to continue to grow. Cut off the smaller pumpkins to help the growth of the bigger ones.

- **Harvest Time**

- Once you begin to see your pumpkin form, you might first want to do a happy dance. The next step is to place a piece of cardboard or newspaper underneath your pumpkin to protect the growing fruit from the soil. The soil can cause the pumpkin to rot over time.

First, the outside pumpkin skin is fully colored. Also, the skin is hard, and the stem begins to shrivel and dry, according to Bonnie Plants. In addition, when you cut the pumpkin off the vine, cut the stem with a sharp knife.

The more stem the better. The longer stems helps with storing. Your pumpkin will be able to be stored for two to three months.

- **Which Pumpkin is Right for You?**

- The variety of pumpkin you choose will be determined by how you plan to use your pumpkin. Here are a few suggestions:
 - **Carving:** Autumn Gold
 - **Giant Pumpkins:** Dill's Atlantic Giant Jumbo
 - **Mini Pumpkins:** Jake Be Little, We-B-Little
 - **Pie Pumpkins:** Sugar Treat, Hijinks, Baby Bear, Cinderella's Carriage, Peanut Pumpkin
 - **Colourful Pumpkins:** Jarrahdale, Pepitas Pumpkin

To learn more about pumpkins or to learn more about gardening in general, contact Jayden Fisher at the band office. Miigwetch.