

Growing Pumpkins



How to sow seed

- Seeds can be sown in pots from April to June. Fill a 7.5cm (3in) pot with compost, place a seed in on its side 2.5cm (1in) deep and cover.
- Label, water and place on a windowsill or in a propagator. When roots begin to show though the bottom of the pot transfer into a 12.5cm (5in) pot.
- Once seedlings have established, plant outside spacing them 2-3m (6-10ft) apart. Seeds can also be sown from late May to early summer directly into the ground.
- Choose a sunny, sheltered spot and improve the soil before planting by digging in well-rotted manure or compost. Sow two seeds on their side 2.5cm (1in) deep.
- Once the seedlings have germinated, remove the weakest one.

Looking after plants

- Protect seedlings with mulch and feed with general fertiliser or tomato plant food, watering regularly though the growing season.
- If you're growing larger varieties use wire as a guide to train shoots as they grow. Remove some fruits before they develop, leaving two or three fruits on the plant. This will encourage the plant to put its energy into producing larger fruit.
- As the fruits get bigger raise them up onto a piece of wood or brick to protect them from rotting. Remove any leaves shading the fruit as it needs maximum light to ripen.
- If there's a risk of an early frost protect the fruit with cardboard and straw.

Harvesting and storage

- Leave the fruit on the plant for as long as possible to mature and ripen. When the stem cracks and the skin is very tough, the fruit is ready to be picked.
- Cut fruit off with a long stalk before the first frost. Pumpkins can be stored between four to six months.
- Expose the pumpkin to sunlight outside for ten days or keep indoors at 27-32°C (81-90°F) for four days to harden.
- Keep your pumpkin stored in a well-ventilated place at about 10°C degrees (50°F).