

How to Grow a Giant Pumpkin!

Sowing the Seed Indoors

In April or May, sow seeds indoors in a 4-inch peat pot, using well-drained potting soil. Plant one seed per pot ¼ to ½ inch deep. Cover seed lightly with soil and moisten with lukewarm water. Use fertilizer #10-52-17 to develop strong roots.

Germinate seeds at 20°C (65-70°F) for 10 days, keeping the soil moist – not soaked. Grow plants in a cool, sunny place of 16°C (60°F) for sturdy, slow growth. As the plant grows, replant in a larger pot by putting the entire peat pot into the new soil so as not to disturb the roots.

Outdoor Soil Preparation

The soil should be deeply dug and enriched with aged manure or composted material. Use at least one shovel full per plant or seed.

To transplant outdoors –

Soil temperature should be +17°C (+60°F). Plants should be protected from frost at night with a canopy. Remove this canopy on hot, sunny days to prevent overheating your plant. Drench pots and plants in a starter solution of #10-52-17 at one teaspoon per 4 litres of lukewarm water. Be careful not to disturb the roots. Bury plants, roots and stem to the starter or first leaves. This keeps the stem from drying out and protects the roots.

Seeding Outdoors –

If you have not started your seed indoors, sow seeds outdoors between May 30 –

June 10, in a sunny location with well-drained soil.

Plant seeds every 2 metres (6 feet), 6-13 mm (¼ to ½ inch) deep. Cover seed lightly. Moisten soil with lukewarm water and fertilizer #10-52-17 to develop strong roots. Germinate seeds at 20°C (65-70°F) for 10 days, protect with a shelter until danger of frost is passed, keeping the soil moist (not soaked).

Grow plants in a sunny location.



Pollinating the Flower –

Pumpkins have both male and female flowers. Watch for the first female bloom – it has a baby fruit formed under the flower. The male flower has a plain stem. To pollinate the female, pinch off a fresh male bloom, trim the corolla or flower petals off and rub the pollen laden stamen in the center of the newly opened female bloom. The best time to pollinate is about 11 a.m. before it gets too hot. In the outdoors, pollination happens naturally by wind and insects.

Care of your Pumpkin –

Pumpkins put out several vines. Limit the growth to the vine with the first fruit. Cut off other lateral vines and tie off the cut ends with string to prevent insects from entering the vine. Remove all blooms, flowers etc.

from the plant after the first fruit is formed to prevent further pollination. Feed your plant every 10 days with a solution of 5-20-20 (one teaspoon per 4 litres of warm water). Choose a natural or commercial fertilizer. Take care that your pumpkin does not grow so fast that it breaks the stem or pulls the root out of the ground. You may have to move the pumpkin and vine closer to the root to prevent this from happening. Raising your pumpkin off the ground and cushioning with foam or soft material may prevent rot and give your pumpkin a more perfect shape.

Give your Pumpkin a TREAT!

You may wish to treat your pumpkin with a feeding of milk or beer. This is not necessary when growing giant pumpkins, however, some say it enhances the growth of the pumpkin. Make a small slit in the main stem close to the top of the pumpkin. Place a wick in the slit and soak the other end of the wick in a jar of milk or beer. The wick could be a strip of absorbent material such as toweling or sweatshirt material. In the north, frost is a danger in early September. Be prepared to cover your pumpkin with a blanket at night. Remember – if the leaves have been touched by frost but not the stem, the pumpkin will continue to grow.

Harvesting your Pumpkin

When frost becomes a danger and days become cool, it is time to harvest. Cut stem of the pumpkin with a knife, being careful not to damage your pumpkin. Get help to move your pumpkin inside for storage in a dry place where the temperature is 17°C (60°F). Nicks, bruises and blemishes on your pumpkin will cause deterioration (rot).

Rules:

1. Your pumpkin must be grown in Northern Ontario
2. You must bring your pumpkin to one of the weigh-in sites in early September. For more information check www.norontagrifood.org
3. Registration - \$2.00

For more details check our website:
www.norontagrifood.org

This event is sponsored in partnership with
**Northern Ontario Agri-Food
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The Ontario Trillium
Foundation is an agency of the Ontario Government.

The largest pumpkin grown in
Northern Ontario to date is

1,147 lb

Beat this record to
win \$100!

Challenge:
be the first to grow a 1,000 lb
pumpkin in Northern Ontario.

For more information contact –

**Northern Ontario Agri-Food Education
& Marketing Inc.**
1540 Hwy 17 E
Wahnapitae ON POM 3CO

PH: 705-694-4396
FAX: 705-694-2030
Email: northernagrifood@gmail.com

www.norontagrifood.org



GROW

- a Giant Pumpkin!

Dill's Atlantic Giant Pumpkin

Howard Dill of Canada is a world champion pumpkin grower. He harvested a 517 lb / 235 kg pumpkin grown from his variety of seeds. His champion pumpkin measured 30 inches/76 cm high; 44 inches/112 cm wide; 43 inches/110 cm long; with a circumference of 10 feet/3.05 m.

A world champion pumpkin weighed in at 1,146 lb/521 kg **BUT** was grown in the USA.

Norfolk County Fair has had a winning entry of 1,438 lb BUT it was grown in southern Ontario.



Follow these instructions carefully and
grow your own champion pumpkin.

Enter your pumpkin to win!