



GIANT PUMPKIN GROWING GUIDELINES AND TIPS

- . Provide 400-600 sq. ft./plant in an area that gets as much sun as possible. This is the optimal size, which can be adjusted to your available area.
- . Ensure your soil PH is between 6.7-7.2 Amend with lime as necessary to adjust.
- . Prepare patch with compost, aged manure & leaves in fall to increase organic matter & promote a healthy, living soil.
- . Always walk on boards when tending your plant to prevent soil compaction.
- . Provide a cloche or cold frame for early protection of seedlings with some form of heat if possible. Be sure to open up your cloche or cold frame appropriately during sunny days to prevent cooking your plant. Temps inside can be 30-40 degrees warmer than outside temps on sunny days.
- . In most cases, your plant's main vine will grow in the opposite direction of the first, true leaf which will form in-between the two oval leaves.
- . Train your plant with side vines running perpendicular to main vine. Think of your plant as a Christmas tree where the main vine is the trunk and the secondary vines are branches.
- . Foliar feed your plant 2-3 times a week after the vine is two feet long with a liquid fish and seaweed product.
- . Allow main vine to grow approximately 20'-30' before pinching end to terminate growth. Terminate secondaries at 10'-14'. These are optimal sizes, and can be adjusted according to the area you have available in your patch.
- . Do not allow vines to grow from secondary or side vines. Tertiary vines are like tomato plant sucker vines & should be pinched off as they appear, unless you need to fill in areas due to lost secondaries, or if your plant's vine pattern allows tertiary vines.
- . Lightly cover main vine with soil to within three feet of either side of fruit, as well as all secondary vines. Lightly covering vines promotes tap root growth under every leaf node, which makes the whole plant part of the root system. If possible, mix in an appropriate amount of mycorrhizae and a balanced fertilizer with your soil burying mixture.
- . Female blossoms will have a ping-pong ball size baby pumpkin under the flower.
- . Train your main vine in an "S" shape so that female blossoms are on the outside of the curve. This will provide the pumpkin room for the shoulders to grow without pressing against the vine, possibly tearing itself off the vine. Move the vine slightly each day or the vine will snap if moved too much all at once.

- . Cull all fruit but one on the plant by the first week in August for maximum growth. Do not cull extra fruit all at once, but instead over the course of a few days. Fruit set should be on the main vine a minimum of ten feet from the stump.
- . Determine the fruit you should keep by evaluating growth rate, distance from the stump and position on the vine. The optimal position on the vine is perpendicular to the vine.
- . If your “keeper” fruit is not 90 degrees to the main vine, it can be moved 1/8”-1/4” per day (during the warmest part of the day) until it is perpendicular. This is a delicate operation as the slightest bit of excess movement will cause the pumpkin stem to break.
- . Protect your fruit from any sun exposure by covering with a sheet or erecting a shade structure. This will help keep the skin supple for those 20-25# per day peak growth periods.
- . Control Powdery Mildew disease by applying an appropriate fungicide to the top and bottom of plant leaves. Follow product instructions carefully and begin applying in mid-July before the onset of mildew and apply every 3 weeks.
- . Control Cucumber Beetles & Squash Bugs with appropriate insecticide. Follow product instructions in mid-June.
- . Never spray in the heat of the day. Always spray when the sun is off the plant in the evening or early in the morning to allow time for the leaves to dry.
- . Use organic meal fertilizers. Avoid granular fertilizers and Miracle Grow type liquids which contain excessive salts.
- . Cover your fruit with a blanket in cooler, late season weather to retain heat in the fruit for continued growth.
- . When cutting the fruit from the vine at harvest, cut the vine on either side of the stem, not the stem itself, leaving one foot (1’) of vine attached to the stem. This will help your fruit last longer.
- . When seeds are harvested, wash thoroughly with water and dry for three weeks with a fan blowing on them.

For more detailed information, visit www.BigPumpkins.com and www.mainpumpkins.com and review the articles in the “How-To-Grow” Section.

Damariscotta Pumpkinfest & Regatta™

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