

Guide to Growing Vegetables from Seed

Hardening Off: Harden off plants about ten days before transplanting. Put them outside for about two hours (during the warmest part of the day at first) 7 to 10 days before putting them in the ground. Increase outside time by an hour each day for a week or so.

Your soil should be well-drained, with plenty of organic matter, and mulch to prevent excessive evaporation. Water preferably with warm water, one or two inches per week. In warm or desert climates, you might need to water every day.



Harvesting:

When handling hot peppers, you may want to wear gloves and avoid contact with your skin – especially with your face and eyes. Peppers contain capsaicin, which is what makes them “hot,” and the substance can burn. Harvest as soon as peppers reach your desired size and color, but keep in mind that more mature peppers have the best flavor. Bell peppers get sweeter, mature to their final coloring, and continue to increase in vitamin C content the longer they’re on the plant. When frost threatens, harvest any fruit still on the plant.

How to Save the Seed:

Allow peppers to become fully ripe (usually turning a deep red) and mature before harvesting. Save seeds from the largest fruits with good form that are growing on healthy plants. Cut open the fruit, making sure there is no mold inside. Collect the seed, then spread them on a screen in a warm spot to dry. Even when handling just the seeds of hot pepper varieties, it’s advisable to wear gloves and avoid touching your eyes or face. Capsaicin is especially concentrated in the seeds.

Pumpkin *Cucurbita pepo*

Growing Needs: Annual, full sun, loamy soil.

Popular around Halloween, these easy to grow vining plants make amazing pies, the seeds delicious snacks, and make some awesome fall decorations!

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They come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors, but of course the classic pumpkins are a deep yellow or orange.

Sowing & Growing:

Direct seed pumpkins 1” deep in hills, 3 or 4 seeds per hill, once soil temperatures reach a consistent 70°F. Optimum soil temperature is 85°F. Pumpkins love heat, and are very sensitive to cold. Plants should emerge in 5-10 days. In cooler climates, seed pumpkins indoors in coconut coir pots 2-4 weeks before last frost, and be sure to harden off before planting. Once plants reach 2-3 inches in height, thin to 2 or 3 plants per hill. If planting in rows, make your rows 6-10 feet apart and sow seeds 6-12” apart. Thin plants to one every 18-36”.

Pumpkins have both male and female flowers, and both must open for fruiting to occur. If your first flowers aren’t forming fruits, that’s normal – those are the male flowers. Be patient and wait for all the female flowers to open as well. Make sure to provide plenty of nutrients and water as they’re growing for best production.

Harvesting:

Harvest when they are fully mature. Leave fruits on the vine until they stop growing and the vine dies back. They will keep best and have viable seeds. Don’t take pumpkins off the vine just because they’ve reached your desired size. Cut the stem about 4-5” above the fruit with a sharp knife and let the pumpkin dry in the sun.

How to Save the Seed:

Pumpkins are part of the squash family, and will cross pollinate with themselves as well as other squash/pumpkin varieties. Since they are insect pollinated, make sure to isolate varieties by physical barriers such as a cage or by at least ½ mile. The seeds are mature when the fruit’s fully mature and the vine has died back - collect seed whenever you cut open the fruit for eating. You can simply rinse seeds well, then spread them out to dry

