

SFA

Seeds for Africa

Pumpkin

Start seeds indoors about three weeks before the last expected frost. If your growing season is long and warm, sow seeds directly in the garden when the soil temperature has reached 60 degrees F.

Choose a site that gets full sun and has soil with a pH of 6.0 to 6.8. Pumpkins need light, very rich soil that drains well. Dig in large amounts of compost and well-cured manure to ensure the right combination.

Till your pumpkin patch deep and wide: Both roots and vines can spread as far as 15 feet in all directions.

Harden off the seedlings, whether store-bought or homegrown, and transfer them to the garden when all danger of frost has passed. Plant them in hills, setting them at least as deep as they were in the pots. Spacing varies with the variety (check the seed packet), but in general allow at least 5 feet between plants in each direction. (See "How to Plant Vegetable Seeds Outdoors.")

Mulch with organic matter once plants are established to conserve moisture and deter weeds, and use cloches or floating row covers to protect young plants from chilly winds.

Make sure the plants get 1 to 2 inches of water a week, especially when they're blooming and setting fruit.

Feed plants with compost tea or seaweed extract every two to three weeks.

Pinch vines back to limit their growth once fruits appear.

Rotate pumpkins once in a while to keep them symmetrical, but take care to move them only a little at a time to avoid breaking the brittle vines.

Place boards under large pumpkins to keep them from rotting.

Harvest orange pumpkins after the vines have shrivelled and died, but before the first hard freeze. Cut white varieties when their skins are still streaked with green (if they're allowed to ripen outdoors, their shells turn pale yellow).

© Seeds for Africa Limited

No part of this document may be reproduced, copied or distributed without the express written permission of the Directors of Seeds for Africa Limited.

www.seedsforafrica.co.za

Seeds for Africa