



Twin Silos Farm

Pumpkin Patch & Organic Vegetables

December 2010

Varieties of Pumpkins:

There are literally hundreds of varieties of pumpkins, from the small miniatures which only weigh a couple of ounces, to the giant varieties that routinely show up at fall weighoffs at 1,000 pounds and more! Pumpkins belong to the "Cucurbita" family. There are a wide range of varieties falling into these categories: Cucurbita Moschata— This group of primarily squash includes the pumpkins frequently used for commercially canned pumpkins. Commercial pumpkin varieties usually have a tan-colored skin. Cucurbita Pepo— These are the Jack-o-Lantern pumpkins you carve on Halloween, as well as the cute little miniature pumpkins that fit in the palm of your hand. Some of the most popular varieties include: Connecticut Field pumpkin, Howden pumpkin, Howden Biggie, Jack B. Little Miniature pumpkins. Cucurbita Maxima— Maxima, as it's name implies, are the giant pumpkins. Giant pumpkin growing has become a very popular hobby. Giant pumpkin growers are among the most devoted, and perhaps fanatical of gardeners. Popular giant pumpkin varieties include: Atlantic Giant pumpkin, Big Max pumpkins.

Days to maturity varies widely, depending upon variety. Plan 90-100 days for miniature pumpkins, 100-120 days for Jack O'Lanterns and 130-160 days for giant pumpkins.

How to Grow Pumpkins:

Pumpkin plants can be started indoors 2-3 weeks before the last frost date in your area. Or, pumpkin seeds can be direct seeded into your garden. Plant these tender annuals outdoors after the last frost date for your area. Pumpkins are vining plants that can quickly spread very far. Follow the spacing directions on the packet. They can vary significantly variety. Water well after planting, and a second time two to four days later, only if there has been no rain. Pumpkin seeds can be planted in hills four to six feet apart Sow four to six seeds per hill, thinning to two to three. Or, plant in rows six inches apart, thinning to 1 to 3 feet apart, depending upon how much space you have. Plant miniatures closer, and Giants farther apart. Pumpkins are big feeders. They prefer a very rich soil, with lots of compost and manure (if you can get it). Fertilize on a regular basis. Use a high nitrogen formula in early plant growth. Switch over to a fertilizer high in Phosphorous (the middle number) just before the blooming period. On occasion, pollination can be a problem.

Pumpkins also need lots of water. Try to keep the soil moist, not wet, at all times. It is also important to avoid getting the leaves wet, if possible. Heat and humidity is the perfect ingredient for powdery mildew, a major problem for your pumpkin patch. Also, avoid watering near dark.

It's easy to tell when a pumpkin is ripe. It turns a bright orange. Pick them when ripe, and put them somewhere in or around the house where they can glow!

Coming in the January Newsletter Pollination and Pests.

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