

**Buy fresh seed.**

Giant pumpkin choices include "Atlantic Giant", "Big Max", Howden or "Prizewinner". Most will average 100-200 pounds when mature, except Howden, which maxes out at 40-50 pounds. If your local seed rack doesn't stock these varieties, check with mail order seed companies such as Burpee, Territorial Seeds, Johnny's, and Harris Seeds. Expect to pay more for these seed varieties; for example, 15 Atlantic Giant pumpkin seeds from one catalog costs \$5.40.

**Choose the right location and time.**

Plant these giant pumpkin seeds away from other pumpkin varieties. Cross-pollination could inhibit your giant pumpkin's growth potential, so isolation is necessary. For maximum growth, plant in an area sheltered from hot, dry winds. Pumpkin seeds will germinate quickest in warm soil but before air temperatures get regularly into the 90's. After Mother's Day is ideal, but try to get them in the ground before the end of June.

**Use lots of aged steer manure.**

Work at least one shovel full into each mound; rototill in at least a dozen shovels full of manure surrounding the mound because every place the vine touches the ground will result in more roots.

**Plant on raised mounds, three to five seeds per mound.**

Thin each mound to the two most vigorous plants after they are a couple of inches tall. Space the mounds twenty feet apart to allow room for the vines. Plant in late May.

**Feed each plant every ten days** with a diluted fertilizer solution containing a 5-20-20 or a similar formula that encourages fruit formation, not leaves and vines.

**Water plants at first sign of wilt** in hot weather, that could be as much as every day. Don't overhead water; wet leaves encourage disease.

**Control squash bugs and beetles** by hand-picking or with a portable vacuum.

**As the plant grows, cut off most of the vines except the one with the first (or the most vigorous) fruit that appears.** Do this for each plant. Tie off the amputated vine ends with string to prevent insects from entering the vine. Remove all blooms regularly to prevent further pollination so that the plant directs its energy to the one remaining pumpkin.