

# Pumpkin and Squash Growing Guide

*Cucurbita spp.*



Pumpkin and squash are members of the winter squash family.

## UK Market

Most pumpkins are grown for Halloween with the most popular size being 6-8kg. Squashes are normally grown for autumn and winter storage.

## Soil Types

Most squashes and pumpkins need a pH of 6.5 to grow successfully.

## Growing

Pumpkins and squashes can be sown and then transplanted or direct drilled.

They can be sown in April into blocks and planted out after 3-4 weeks in May when the plants are at a 4-5 true leaf stage. They can be planted through black plastic mulch which helps with the level of weed control and keep the fruits clean.

If the crop is direct drilled then two seeds are drilled at each station and then thinned to one plant at a later stage.

Most pumpkins are grown at a 60-90 cm (24-35 inch) spacing with 90 cm (35 inches) between the rows giving a density of approximately 12,300-18,500 plants per hectare (approx. 5,000-7,500 plants per acre).

It is important that the crop is kept frost free, the crop needs to be given protection if it is drilled/planted before the last frost or it can be planted/drilled after the last frost. They also need to be harvested before the first autumn/winter frost.

## Post-harvest Treatment

When the crop has ripened on the vine they can then be cut and cured in the field prior to storage. If there is a risk of frost during the curing time then they can be cured inside be standing in a glasshouse or exposing to heat in a building

The optimum temperature to store pumpkins is 10°C at a relative humidity of 75%.

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## Fertiliser usage

Source: Crop-specific Protocol Courgettes, Marrows, Squash and Pumpkins. Effective 1st April 2011. Red Tractor Assurance for Farms, Fresh Produce Scheme.

Major nutrient requirements	Soil index				
	0	1	2	3	3+
	kg/ha				
Nitrogen (N)	150	100	50	0 <sup>a</sup>	0 <sup>a</sup>
Phosphate (P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> )	175	125	75	25M	0
Potash (K <sub>2</sub> O)	250	200	150 (2-) 100m (2+)	0	0
Magnesium (Mg)	150	100	0	0	0

The recommendations assume overall application. A starter fertiliser containing nitrogen and phosphate may be beneficial.

<sup>a</sup> A small amount of nitrogen may be needed if SMN levels are low in the 0-30cm of soil. Apply no more than 100 kg/a N in the seedbed. Apply the remainder as a top dressing when the crop is fully established.

M Maintenance dressing

## Diseases

Powdery mildew can be a serious issue and a fungicide programme may be needed.

## Varieties available from Elsoms

### Pumpkin

#### Harvest Moon

Rich orange in colour, 6-8kg in weight, ideal for Halloween sales.

#### Racer

An alternative to Harvest Moon, a good bright orange carving pumpkin. 6-8kg in weight.

### Squash

#### Waltham Butternut

Light tan-coloured Squash with smooth textured flesh, and a unique sweet taste.

## Links

Elsoms Seeds website and catalogue:

<http://www.elsoms.com/>

Assured Produce: *the growing partnership* (contains crop specific protocols):

<http://www.assuredproduce.co.uk>



The information provided in this sheet is intended for general guidance only and is correct to the best of our knowledge. Please be aware that variations in the growing environment and climatic conditions can render this information inaccurate. For more specific advice about fertiliser use please contact a FACTS certified advisor.

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