



## How to grow pumpkin at home

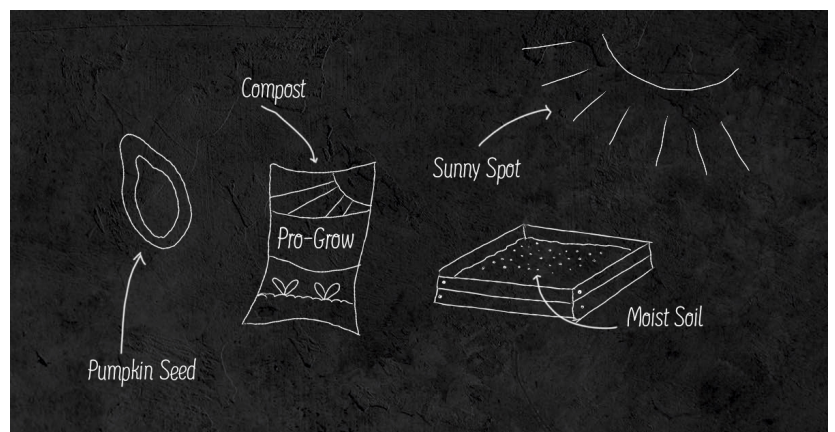
The only thing better than enjoying a bowl of hot, hearty and nourishing pumpkin soup, is knowing that the soup was homemade from pumpkins you grew yourself in your backyard.

Growing your own vegetables is one of the most rewarding things a cooking enthusiast can do – but don't be alarmed, it's much easier than you think.

In fact, growing a pumpkin is a perfect place to start as they are known to be relatively fuss-free, forgiving and extremely resilient. So, pick up your shovel, put on your overalls and let us help you grow pumpkin at home.

What you'll need:

- A pumpkin seed
- A private, roomy and sunny pumpkin patch (space) to plant your pumpkin
- Moist, well-drained soil
- Compost



### Selecting your pumpkin patch

Pumpkins are private plants, who thrive best in sunny areas that are a little out of the way – for example: the side of a shed. To grow strong and happy, they require approximately one square metre of space for each plant, and they will not grow successfully if planted near their sworn enemies: the potato and tomato.

### When to plant your pumpkin

The ideal timing to plant your pumpkin depends largely on your exact location and the temperature there, but a good guide for growing successful pumpkins in Australia is to plant them at the end of winter, in early September.

## **The importance of good quality soil and compost**

Whilst pumpkin plants are relatively low maintenance, to make sure you give them the best start in life it's very important to ensure that you are planting into well-drained, moist soil. The best way to test this is to touch the soil: if it sticks to your fingers, your pumpkin will most likely thrive.

You definitely don't need fancy fertilizers, or plant-feeding products to grow pumpkin plants. However, they love compost and will thank you with larger, juicier, meatier pumpkins if you add a layer of compost scraps to the soil for them to feed on.

## **Planting and caring for your pumpkin plant**

Once you have your seed, patch, soil and compost sorted – it's time to plant your pumpkin seed. There's no science to this, just put your index finger into the soil, pop the seed into the hole and cover with soil, compost and a bit of water.

When it comes to caring for your pumpkin, less is more. All you need to do now is check that the soil remains well-drained and moist, and make sure that new compost is added regularly for additional nutrients.

## **Harvesting your pumpkin**

Your pumpkin will reach maturity 70 to 120 days after planting, and you can check if the pumpkins are ready by listening to the sound that is made when tapping them. A ripe pumpkin should sound hollow.

Once cut (and to ensure maximum shelf life), the pumpkins should be cured. The easiest way to do this is to leave them in the sun for a week, and then move them to a cool, dark place. Here, you can leave them for up to 10 months, whilst you decide what recipe is worthy of your beautiful, homegrown pumpkins.