



## Growing Pumpkin in a kitchen garden

Pumpkin is a high value and nutritious crop. It is rich in dietary fibre, antioxidants, minerals & vitamins. They come in many skin colours; orange or yellow, dark to pale green, brown, white, red and grey.



Dried pumpkin fruits can be milled & mixed with sorghum and finger millet to make porridge and flour for baking. Pumpkin skin can be blended to juice, while seeds can be roasted like groundnuts. The two products are used as zinc supplements. The leaves can also be eaten as vegetables.

### Varieties

There are a number of pumpkin varieties grown in Kenya that are recognized by their colour, shape, ridges, stripes and spots. Cinderella is one of the most common varieties of pumpkins grown in Kenya. It is smooth and has red-orange skin with flat shape. Ask your agrovet which ones they have stocked.





## Land Preparation

- Land should be prepared early in the season
- Deep soil cultivation of about 20-30 cm is recommended.
- Prepare the land to a fine tilth, spread well-rotten manure and dig it in
- Make moulds/small hills 1 foot high and 3 feet apart. Prepare the hills leaving a trench of about half a foot to hold water around the roots of the plant.

## Planting

- Soak seeds overnight to make sprouting a little smoother
- Plant 3-4 seeds per mould spacing them about 15 to 20cm apart then cover with a light soil. Use 125 g TSP & 1 debe of manure per mould. Pumpkin is a heavy feeder.
- After they sprout, thin out the weaker and smaller seedlings to leave just 2 or 3 strong healthy ones per mound.

## Management in the field

- Weed after 3-5 weeks before the crop spreads to minimize damage
- 3 weeks after germination, Topdress with nitrogenous fertiliser like CAN/UREA to keep leaves green and healthy. You need 50kg per acre. You can also use Super Gro foliar feed up to the point that they start to flower.
- Intercropping: If intercropping with a support climbing crop e.g. maize, start with maize, and then follow with pumpkin two weeks later. Pumpkin is a good cover crop which kills weed and maintain moisture in the soil.
- Rotate pumpkin with cereals, legumes or cabbages.



## Pests and Diseases

Pests and diseases reduce the yield of pumpkin plants. Scouting the garden regularly will help in identifying infestation or infection early. Powdery Mildew and Anthracnose are common diseases, and Cutworm, Melon fly and Aphids are common pests that attack pumpkin.

## Harvesting

### Leaves

Pumpkin leaves are high in nutrition and rich in vitamin A, iron, calcium and many minerals. They are harvested when young and tender and used to make soups or as ingredient in other dishes.

### Fruits

Fruits are mature after 3-4 months depending on the variety.

- You will know it is mature when: gets the variety colour, stem attached begins to dry and gives a hollow sound if tapped.
- The pumpkin fruit should not be harvested until the skin has reached full colour and has hardened.
- Use a sharp knife to cut off the stem at the vine. Be careful not to damage the vine, if there are more pumpkins still on it.
- Do not carry the pumpkin by the stem. Carry the pumpkin out of the field by holding it in the palms of your hands.
- To harvest, cut so that you leave 2.5 cm of stem attached to the fruit.
- Store in a cool and dry place. Wash the pumpkin properly before storage. Pumpkins are best stored on a board or piece of cardboard. Do not store the fruit on a cement floor, as they tend to rot.
- Fruit can store for 4-6 months without deterioration.