

of the same amount of fertilizer after the first fruits have set. All squashes need plenty of moisture while growing, so be sure to water thoroughly throughout the growing period, but apply less to winter squashes as they are ripening off. Using a mulch of straw (6 inches thick), old hay, newspapers or black plastic will help to provide an even supply of moisture and control weeds. If mulches are not used, cultivation should be shallow (no deeper than one inch) to avoid injuring the shallow roots.

The "summer squashes" such as zucchini, crookneck and scallops should be picked when the skin is tender and easily punctured by a fingernail. The best eating quality occurs when the seeds are essentially undeveloped; zucchini and crookneck types are best when 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter and 6 to 8 inches long; scallops are best when 3 to 4 inches across. Be sure to pick regularly as mature fruit left on the plants tend to reduce production.

Winter squashes are best when allowed to "vine ripen"; the skin should be very hard and difficult to penetrate with a fingernail. Many gardeners expose their winter squashes to several days of cold weather before storing them. It is best to cut the squashes from the vines leaving a 2 to 3 inch stem; leave them to cure in the sun for at least a week. Sort through them carefully and discard or process those which show any soft spots or physical injury. Store the squashes in a cool, dry location for use throughout the winter months.

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Pumpkins grow best in light soils which contain relatively large quantities of well-rotted manure or similar organic matter. The soil should be worked to a depth of 6 to 8 inches followed by mixing in liberal quantities of the organic matter.

Some growers dig a planting area approximately 1 foot deep, add manure, then cover with 4 inches of soil, and pack firmly. Seeds are then planted in hills 8 to 12 feet apart and 3 to 4 seeds per hill. When plants are 3 inches tall, thin to 1 or 2 plants per hill. As the vines grow and begin to set fruit, select 1 or 2 fruit per vine and remove all subsequent blossoms as they form. As the pumpkins develop, you may want to eliminate all but one pumpkin per vine. This assumes that you intend to grow large decorative pumpkins.

As the season progresses, regular watering is very important as any stress caused by lack of water will decrease pumpkin size. An application of one-half to one ounce of general purpose fertilizer (10-10-10 or 5-10-10) is made after thinning and another when vines begin to run. The fertilizer is placed in a 6-inch ring around the plant(s) and covered with soil. Regular applications (weekly) of a water-soluble fertilizer (e.g., Miracle-Gro, Peters, etc.) after the fruit has set may be beneficial.

As they grow larger, some support and/or rotation of the pumpkins may be beneficial in terms of avoiding flat spots and enhancing overall color. Some growers have reported the use of milk injections into the vines to enhance size; however, regular watering and good soil fertility should produce excellent results.

Regular applications of an insecticide should be made to control cucumber beetle from the seedling stage on. If Sevin is used, limit time of application to the early evening hours to protect bees from damage.

The above text was provided by Dr. Richard Zimmerman (293-4801) and modified for this information flyer by Willem van Eck (293-2219/6258) for WVU Soil Testing Lab.