



Garden Tips from the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens version 3102004
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Pumpkins - By Shane Smith

Pumpkins are easy to grow on the high plains as long as you have fertile soil, a sunny spot and choose the right variety of pumpkin seed. There is a wonderful short-season variety of pumpkin that never has the "green" problem because it starts from day one as an orange fruit. That variety is called "Autumn Gold." The Cheyenne Botanic Gardens gives a few of these Autumn Gold pumpkin seeds away each spring during "Museum Weekend" which usually occurs around the 3rd weekend of May. Call the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens for more information at 307-637-6458.

You can tell if pumpkins and all winter squash are mature by using a thumbnail test. Slide your nail against the skin of the pumpkin using light to moderate pressure. If the pumpkin is mature and ripe you will not see any marking left by the nail. If it is not mature, you will see marks readily made by the nail. If it is immature it will not store for very long and should be used or discarded within a few days to a week. If it is mature, you can easily store it until Halloween!

Often in our short season areas, you are left with some green spots on the fruit. If the fruit is mostly mature, sometimes the green will continue to fade to orange. However there is a better solution for the next gardening season: grow the right variety!

Once the pumpkin vines have frosted you might as well harvest your fruits. At that point you can only hope that they have reached the proper orange color and are fully mature, but that is not always the case. Being mature means they will store well (until Halloween at least!). Store pumpkins in a cool, dry place.

The first AVERAGE frost date in Cheyenne, Wyoming is September 20th!