

Growing Seminole Pumpkin in Florida

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Seminole pumpkins, a cultivar of *Cucurbita moschata*, are one of the most reliable pumpkins for Florida gardens. They were traditionally grown by the Creek and Miccosukee peoples in Florida. Seminole pumpkin is a good choice for hot, humid, disease prone areas. They are not native but have native tendencies and can grow well in Florida's sandy soil. This pumpkin is known for its unique characteristics, including its compact size, round shape, and sweet, stringless flesh.



Photo by Tia Silvasy

Growing Conditions

Climate: The Florida Seminole pumpkin thrives in warm and subtropical climates, making it ideal for growing in USDA zones 8-10.

Soil: Well-draining, loose soil with a pH between 6.0 and 6.8 is preferred.

Sunlight: Full sun (at least 6 hours of direct sunlight) is recommended.

Watering: Consistent moisture is essential, but avoid overwatering, which can lead to fungal diseases.

Planting time for Central Florida: March – June



Photo by Tia Silvasy

Planting and Care of Seminole Pumpkin

Plant seeds directly in the soil 1" deep or plant seeds in small pots and transplant once the pumpkin plant has its first true leaf (about 10 days after planting). Plant in mounds 3-feet apart and thin to one seedling per hill. The vines grow very long and can produce 20 – 30 fruits if planted in a well-cultivated area. Use a balanced fertilizer (10-10-10 NPK) and side-dress with a high-phosphorus fertilizer (10-20-10 NPK) when the vines start to spread. They can be grown on the ground or trained to climb a fence or tree, and the fruits will hang as they ripen. From seed to harvest is 95-120 days. The Seminole Pumpkin will produce male and female flowers and pollination by bees, other pollinators, or by hand is needed for fruit set. Harvest the Seminole pumpkin when they start to turn orange or wait until the entire pumpkin turns orange, the rind is hard, and the stem starts to dry out and turn brown. Seminole pumpkin is a heirloom vegetable, so you can save the seeds from mature pumpkins to grow from year to year.



Photo by Tia Silvasy



As the pumpkin ripens it turns from green to orange.

Photo by Tia Silvasy

Eating Seminole Pumpkin

Seminole pumpkin has firm deep orange flesh and is said to be sweeter than butternut squash. Eat it baked, steamed or roasted in the oven. Excellent pies can be made from Seminole pumpkin too! The pumpkin can be preserved through canning, freezing, or dehydrating. It's an excellent keeper and fruits can last up to a year after harvest at room temperature in a cool dry place. The pumpkin seeds can be roasted and eaten if you don't need to save the seeds for planting.

Pests and Diseases

Caterpillars can eat pumpkin leaves and fruits.

Scout often and hand pick or use a biological pesticide such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) to protect your plants.

Gummy stem blight is a fungal disease that can be prevented by watering at the base of the vine instead of overhead and keeping mulch away from the main stem.



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