

## St James - Growing Competition 2018

This year the growing competition is to grow the largest Pumpkin with an added challenge of producing the best dressed one.

The type of Pumpkin is Big Rock and have now been delivered to school. They are part of the squash family and fall under the category of winter squashes.

The competition closing date is to be finalised but will be around mid-October. Judging will be done in school before the assembly where winners will be announced.

### How to grow pumpkins

- **Planting** - plant in a sunny position in humus (add garden compost or horse manure) to the soil. The compost/manure should be at the bottom of the hole mixed with the soil. Use any excess soil to create a ring around the plant to help contain water. If planting in a pot it needs a big one.
- **Watering** - water every other day giving the roots a good soaking. The soil ring helps with watering but another option is to sink a flower pot, or a plastic 'coke' bottle with the bottom cut off, beside the plant to help water get to the roots. The manure in the soil helps retain the water for the plant to use.
- **Feeding** - Early on nitrogen-rich pelleted chicken manure is good for encouraging fast, leafy growth but when fruits (Pumpkins) appear switch to high-potash feeds such as tomato feed to help fruit development. Feed every week to 10 days.
- **Growing** - Place a tripod of strong posts above each plant and tie the new growth to them as they develop, or train them up an existing trellis or wires. Depending how many pumpkins you grow and how big they get there could be a lot of weight that needs supporting.
- Remove some fruits before they develop, leaving two or three fruits on the plant. This will encourage the plant to put its energy into producing larger fruit.
- If fruits are on the ground, raise them up onto a piece of wood or brick to protect them from rotting. Remove any leaves shading the fruit as it needs maximum light to ripen.
- **Harvesting** - They should be harvested by carefully cutting the stem so that a couple of inches remain on the fruit. This will stop any neck rot. If you have spare pumpkins you can harvest them for eating or making soup.

- **Problems** - powdery mildew is a fungus that appears as a white coating on the leaves. Although the fungus won't spread to the fruit, it curbs the capacity of affected leaves to photosynthesise, thereby reducing the growth of the pumpkin. Removing badly affected leaves and pruning side shoots that are crowded together and encroaching on your pumpkin will help to reduce this, as will watering and feeding.

Good luck and enjoy watching your pumpkins grow.

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