PLANT FACT SHEET

Cucurbita maxima Duchesne ex Lam.

GENUS *Cucurbita* **FAMILY** Cucurbitaceae

COMMON NAMES Pumpkin, Winter squash

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Seeds, Flowers, Vegetable

The young leaf tips are eaten cooked. They can also be dried and stored.
The fruit can be eaten cooked. They are baked, boiled, fried, steamed or mashed. They are used in pies and cakes.
The seeds are edible, raw or roasted. They are also ground into a meal.
The male flowers are eaten after removing the stamen and calyx.

DESCRIPTION

A pumpkin family plant. It is a creeping vine with tendrils. It is an annual plant. The stems are soft and round in cross section. The leaves are large and hang loose. They are dark green and kidney shaped. The edges of the leaves are entire. There are large nodes at the base of the leaf. The tendrils are fairly stout and are divided half way along their length into many branches. Male flowers are carried on long upright stalks. The 5 petals are united into a long yellow tube. The female flowers are larger than the male and are fewer in number and carried on shorter stalks. The fruit varies in size, colour and patterns on the skin. They can be round, oval or flattened, with yellow, orange or green skin. The surface can be smooth and rough and warty. The flesh is yellow and edible. The seeds are in the centre. The seeds are white or brown. They are flattened but plump and have a slanting scar at the top. The seeds are edible. (C. moschata does not have hairy stems but has fruit with a stalk thickened near where it joins the fruit.) There are a large number of cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

A subtropical plant. They are grown throughout the tropical countries from sea level to 2400 m altitude. They need a fertile soil. C. moschata is better suited to coastal areas. They are frost sensitive but better suited to cooler areas than C. moschata. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 8-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

They are grown from seed. Usually 2 or 3 seeds are planted together in a mound. The distance apart depends on the cultivar. Some kinds are better for leaf tips. It is good to save seed of adapted kinds.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Fruit are ready for harvest after about 3-4 months. Seed can be saved from fruit for re-sowing but as pumpkins cross pollinate different types become mixed.

NOTES

There are 25 Cucurbita species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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