

The East London Garden Society

Plant Facts

Pumpkins



Pumpkins were used by Native Americans, and became a staple in European and American cuisine. The word *pumpkin* comes from the Greek word *pepon*, which means *large melon*.

Pumpkins were a staple food for Native Americans, who grew them along with maize and beans in a technique called the *Three Sisters Method*. They ate the flesh, seeds, and shells of the pumpkin, and used the shells to store grain.

In the 16th century, the French introduced pumpkins to Tudor England, where they quickly became popular. Pumpkins were used in soups, pies, and preserves, and were also believed to have medicinal properties.

Irish immigrants brought the tradition of carving Jack-O'-Lanterns to America, using pumpkins instead of potatoes or turnips because they were easier to carve.

Pumpkins are now grown on six continents, all but Antarctica. Illinois is the largest producer of pumpkins in the United States.

Scientists believe that pumpkins originated in North America about 9,000 years ago. The oldest pumpkin seeds have been found in Mexico and date back to somewhere between 7,000-5,550 B.C. Pumpkins, along with other forms of squash, were a historically important food staple among Native Americans.