

## Picking the Perfect Pumpkin — and keeping it fresh until Halloween —



**Choosing** Look for pumpkins that are fresh and firm (like the ones sold at Grandma's Gardens : ). Avoid those that have bruises or cuts. Pumpkins should have a flat base so they will sit up straight. Make sure the pumpkin you choose is large enough for the design you want to carve.

**Store in a cool, dry place** until you are ready to carve.

**Cut the top of the pumpkin** with your knife angled toward the stem. This gives the lid a place to sit and prevents it from falling through the hole.

**Using a flat paddle scoop** is the fastest way to clean the inside of pumpkins.

**When using templates or stencils**, tape the stencil to the pumpkins and use a piercing tool to trace around the design. This will leave little perforations on the pumpkin and carving will be super-easy.

**Cut edges curling?** Re-hydrate the pumpkin by soaking it in a tub of water overnight. After removing, allow the pumpkin to drain for half an hour and pat dry. Soaking a pumpkin in a solution of 1 teaspoon bleach per gallon of water will help inhibit mold.

**Slow down the aging process of your pumpkin!** After carving, coat the cut edges and the inside of the jack-o-lantern with petroleum jelly or vegetable oil. This will help seal in moisture. While your jack-o-lantern is on display, periodically mist it with water to help keep it hydrated. Covering it with a damp towel will keep it hydrated when it is not on display. At night, wrap your jack-o-lantern in plastic and refrigerate. This will slow the aging process.

*Tips are compliments of DIY Network as seen in the 9/25/08 Dayton Daily News.*



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