

Technology for cultivating common, white and muscat pumpkin

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Species: Cucurbita maxima Duch. – White pumpkin, Cucurbita moschata Duch. ex Poir. – Muscat pumpkin (violin), Cucurbita pepo L. – Common pumpkin.

In practice, the common, white and muscat pumpkin are grown by direct sowing as a medium-early field crop.

Site selection and soil preparation

The most suitable soils for pumpkins are deep, well-structured, moisture-retentive and well supplied with nutrients – alluvial, chernozem and sandy-loam soils. The plants respond best to a slightly acidic to neutral soil

solution reaction (pH = 6–7.0). Good predecessors are newly ploughed virgin land, perennial grasses, cereal and grain-legume crops. Good results are also obtained when grown after alfalfa, rapeseed, vetch, etc. Pumpkins should not be grown on the same field earlier than every 4–5 years.

After harvesting the preceding crop, the field is disked. In autumn it is ploughed at a depth of 30–35 cm. It is also common practice to apply 1–2 shovels of farmyard manure directly into the planting holes before sowing the seeds. Pumpkins respond very well to deep loosening of the soil to 40–50 cm.

Varieties – Muscat pumpkin 51-17, Plovdivska 48/4, Miranda, Viola, Matilda, etc.

Sowing

Sowing is carried out when the soil temperature at a depth of 10 cm reaches 10–12°C. Such conditions occur in the second half of April, and in cooler regions – at the beginning of May. Sowing is in hills. For one decare, 300–500 g of seed are required. The planting pattern is 200 x 200 or 300 x 100 cm. The number of plants per decare is about 300.

Crop management during the vegetation period

When the plants form 2–3 leaves, they are thinned, leaving one plant per hill. To keep the soil free from weeds, 2–3 hoeings are carried out. Pumpkins have a powerful root system and can be grown without irrigation. When grown on lighter soils and under drought conditions, irrigation is necessary. The last irrigation is performed by the beginning of fruit set. During the vegetation period, weed, disease and pest control is carried out. Simultaneously with hoeing, the plants are top-dressed. The first hoeing and top-dressing are done after the formation of the first true leaf. The second is carried out before the plants have fully developed their lateral branches. A third is applied if necessary.

Harvesting

The crop is harvested at the end of September and in October. The fruits are cured for 20–25 days. Yields are 3–4 t/da.

Hull-less seed pumpkins

In the village of Popgrigorovo in the Dobrich region, hull-less seed pumpkins imported from Austria have been grown for several years. They are suitable for the production of pumpkin oil, which is still not popular in our

country but has proven nutritional and health benefits for the human body. According to specialists, pumpkin seeds are rich in minerals and vitamins.