

### *Cucurbita moschata*

[Synonyms : *Cucurbita macrocarpa*, *Cucurbita pepo* var. *moschata*, *Pepo indicus*, *Pepo moschata*]

**PUMPKIN** is a creeping vine. Native to Middle America it has large yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Abóbora-rasteira* (Portuguese), *Auyama* (South American, Spanish), *Ayote* (Middle American, Spanish), *Bisamkürbis* (German), *Bisampumpa* (Swedish), Butternut squash, *Calabaza* (Argentinian, Spanish), *Calabaza de castilla* (Mexican, Spanish), *Calabaza de Chypre* (Spanish), *Calabaza moscada* (Spanish), Canada crookneck, Canada pumpkin, *Citrouille* (French), *Courge bédouine* (French, Moroccan), *Courge de Chypre* (French), *Courge muscade* (French, Swiss), *Courge musquée* (French), Crookneck squash, Cushaw, *Delaat* (Hebrew), *Delaat hagina* (Hebrew), *Dynia pizmowa* (Polish), English melon, *Fak tawng* (Thai), *Fan gua teng* (Chinese), *Fan kwa* (Chinese), *Fan nan gua* (Chinese), Field pumpkin, Golden cushaw, *Hipak* (Korean), Japanese pumpkin, *Jin dong gua* (Chinese), *Joko* (Bolivian, Spanish), *Joumon* (Creole), *Kabotcha* (Japanese), *Kalyana pushini* (Tamil), *Karr miski* (Arabic, Egyptian), *Kolokynthi i moschomos* (Greek), *Kroghals* (Danish), *Krumhalsgræskar* (Danish), *Kukurbo moska* (Esperanto), *Kürbis* (German), *Labu ambon* (Malay), *Labu kestéla* (Malay), *Labu lemak* (Malay, Singaporean), *Labu manis* (Malay), *Labu merah* (Malay), *Labu parang* (Malay), *Labu tukai* (Malay, Singaporean), *Lacayote* (Peruvian, Spanish), Melon pumpkin, Melon squash, *Miithaa kadduu* (Hindi), Millions, *Moschuskuerbis* (German), *Moschuskürbis* (German), *Moskusgræskar* (Danish), *Muskatgraskar* (Norwegian), Musk melon, *Muskuskörvits* (Estonian), Musky gourd, Musky pumpkin, Musky squash, Musky winter squash, *Myskpumpa* (Swedish), *Nam kwa* (Chinese), *Nihon kabotcha* (Japanese), *Pampoen* (Afrikaans), *Pézsmatök* (Hungarian), *Polong-wattaka* (Sinhalese), Pompion, *Pompoen* (Dutch), *Potiron* (French), *Qar'miskí* (Arabic), Seminole pumpkin, *Speisekürbis* (German), *Sura kai* (Tamil), *Tamalayota* (Colombian, Mexican, Spanish), *Tyква muskatnaia* (Russian), *Waluh* (Javanese, Malay), Winter crookneck, Winter crookneck squash, Winter squash, Winter straightneck squash, *Zapallo* (Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Spanish), *Zucca moscata* (Italian), and *Zucca torta* (Italian).

Warning – the seeds are poisonous, particularly in large doses. They should only be taken under the supervision of a qualified practitioner. Pumpkin should be avoided during pregnancy. In Britain the drug from the seeds can only be obtained from a registered pharmacist.

*Moschata* means ‘musk-scented or musky’.

Today’s name Pumpkin is a corruption of the older name Pompion and in England the plant used to be called English melon which in turn became Millions.

It is believed that the pumpkin was being cultivated in Mexico, the West Indies and Florida in the United States by at least the 16<sup>th</sup> Century when the Spaniards were colonizing Middle and South America.

For the North American Hopi Indians large, patchy orange pumpkins were not only a source of food. They seem to have dried pumpkin flesh as some Indian tribes did melon (*Cucumis melo*) flesh for Winter food. The fresh flesh was also boiled or baked and the seeds were roasted. But they found uses for the shell or rind too. Cleaned and dried, authorities

describe how the shell provided a musical sounding board, and also gave children a 'popcorn' container for their parched corn.

Harvested seeds were precious to the Havasupai tribe for planting the next crop. They stored them (and beans) in the sun-dried rind that served as a container – and according to records they usually hid these precious containers to avoid them being found by their enemies. The Cocopa Indians used the seeds for tanning hides.

As fresh food the field pumpkin flesh was familiar to quite a few North American tribes, including the Keresan, Yuma, Tohono O'Odham, Cahuilla and Seminole – apart from the Hopi already mentioned. The Maricopa, Havasupai and Iroquois Indians all baked or boiled the flesh as a vegetable, the Iroquois fried it, and the Havasupai also used the ground seeds to make a soup or porridge. Fruit flesh was an ingredient in ceremonial dishes prepared by the Iroquois, and the flowers were used in ritual dishes by the Hopi Indians. The Navajo tribe boiled the fruit flesh with sugar to make various preserves, and the Iroquois added the flesh to corn bread mixtures. Examples of its versatility do not stop there however as the Tohono O'Odham tribe dried the seeds and flesh for future use, the Havasupai Indians dried the former similarly, and the Iroquois, Navajo, Maricopa and Cahuilla tribes all dried the flesh for Winter food.

The field pumpkin is the variety that is usually chosen for carved Hallowe'en faces familiar, lit up from inside, in the festivities in the West that take place on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

The fruit are a commercial ingredient today for both by the food and cosmetics industries. Medicinally, the seeds have been used to treat tapeworm.