

Pumpkin leaves, *Cucurbita maxima* (Muboora)



Picture taken @ Horticulture Research Institute



A dish of pumpkin leaves prepared to serve with sadza

Horticulture Research Institute, Box 810 Marondera



Pumpkin leaves a nutritious vegetable

Originated from North and South America. They are in the cucurbitae family. Plants produce yellow flowers and are sensitive to frost or cold weather). Pumpkins are a dual-purpose crop with edible leaves and fruits.

Pumpkin leaves are edible vegetables that can be cooked as relish and served with sadza or rice. It can also be mixed with other green vegetables such as amaranthus to add flavor. Pumpkin leaves can be dried and utilized during winter. In most parts of Zimbabwe, this vegetable is well known and is highly utilized by both urban and rural people.

Nutritive value

- Pumpkin leaves contain healthy amount of vitamin A and vitamin C, calcium, iron, anti-bacteria, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin B6, foliate, magnesium.
- Lowers cholesterol, leaves have a hypolipdemic effect and may be a useful therapy in hyper cholesterol
- Boost fertility, studies show that pumpkin leaves have the potential to generate damaged testicles and increase spermatogenesis.
- It has liver protecting effects.
- It has some antibacterial effects.
- The leaves are rich in iron and play a key role in the cure of anemia.
- They are also noted for lactating properties and are in high demand for nursing mothers.

- It is good for diabetics due to hypoglycemic (sugar reducing) effects
- Increases blood volume and boost immune system.
- The high content in leaves of plants such as pumpkin could have supplementary effect for the daily protein requirement of the body.

Climate

Warm seasoned crop sensitive to frost and susceptible to chilling injury. They require a sunny environment as well as a long growing season of 80 to 130 days. Pumpkin seed may decay if planted in cold or wet soil.

Site selection

Site should be located in full sun and should have a pH of 6-6.5. Pumpkin tolerate pH as low as 5.5.

Pumpkin grows well on moist well-drained soils. Sand loamy are ideal. They also grow well on clay soils nematodes and weed free soils.

Pumpkins are a good rotational crop and can be intercropped with other crops like maize and sorghum. The plant play a major role in the conservation of water, soil and a good weed suppression thus it fit well in other cropping programme.

Land preparation

Conventional land preparation with a depth of 50cm is done since it is a deep rooted crop. Water and nutrients are obtained

from upper rooting zone where there is a lager concentration of roots. Prepare a smooth seedbed.

Planting and spacing

Plant seed 2.5-3.5cm deep in moist soils. In row –spacing of 2-2.25 cm is ideal with plants spaced at 0.5-0.6m or 2m by 2m. Close spacing causes vine that would normally root in the soil at the nodes will not be able to do so as the vine growth is not situated along the soil surface were it belongs.

Seed rate

5kg /ha

Weed control

Hand weeding and hoeing is recommended at early stage of growth. As the plants grow, they cover the ground, shade out and suppress many weeds.

Diseases

Powdery mildew

Control with fungicides, Dithane M45 or Copper oxychloride.

Pests

Leaf miner: Spray with a systemic pesticides

Fruit fly: Spray with Lebaycid