Plant a Pumpkin Seed... Watch it Grow!

Whether it is spring or fall, it is easy and fascinating to plant pumpkin seeds indoors and watch them sprout into seedlings. It takes 8-10 days for a pumpkin seed to become a young plant. For most of that time, the seed is growing down and producing roots. On about the 7th day, two fat, fuzzy, oval baby leaves break through the soil. Within a few more days, a third leaf, with wrinkles and jagged edges, appears in the center of the young plant. Here's what you will need to make a root view chamber so you can watch this amazing process unfold each day.

MATERIALS: (1) potting soil (2) pumpkin seeds, (3) half gallon milk carton, (4) acetate (overhead transparency) or clear plastic, (5) waterproof glue, (6) wooden block or book.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Cut off top of milk carton; rinse the carton with soap and water.

2. Cut a "window" flap on one side of the milk carton, leaving flap attached at the bottom. The flap should be about half an inch in from the edges of the container. Leave the flap attached at the bottom so the roots can be covered when not observed.

3. Cut acetate or plastic for a "window". Place inside carton and glue it on.

4. Loosely pack moist potting soil to one inch below the top of the "window". Plant one seed, flat side against the top center of the "window" about 1" deep.

5. Place a 1" block or book under the back bottom edge of the milk carton so the "window" tips toward the ground. This encourages the roots to grow close to the window for easy viewing.

6. Keep "window" flap closed except when viewing roots. Check soil each day, making sure it is moist but not soaking. When the seed sprouts and grows above the soil, keep container (but not roots) exposed to daylight.

7. Use a journal to record changes. Make a time-lapse drawing using a different colored pencil each day.

THE FALL HARVEST not only brings pumpkins. It also brings pumpkin paraphernalia: pumpkin china, pumpkin pencils, pumpkin figurines, pumpkin napkins, pumpkin puppets, pumpkin earrings, pumpkin stationery, pumpkin pencil sharpeners, pumpkin candles, pumpkin t-shirts, pumpkin hats, and even pumpkin toothbrushes — an entire world of pumpkin gizmos, gifts and gadgets. They are manufactured all over the world, and some are carefully displayed in high-priced antique stores.

Become a treasure hunter and a museum curator, collecting and displaying pumpkin paraphernalia in your very own Pumpkin Museum. Ask relatives and friends to look through their attics and basements for anything and everything related to pumpkins. Don't forget about original pumpkin art — create your own paintings and sculptures of pumpkin themes. We have museums for baseball, rock and roll, and the automobile. Why not pumpkins?

MATERIALS: (1) a corner in a room or hallway, (2) a table or bookcase, (3) drawing paper or grid paper, (4) a ruler, (5) pencil or pen, (6) a measuring tape, (7) 5" x 8" index cards, (8) one grand collection of pumpkin paraphernalia, brought together from stores, attics, basements, and created by the pumpkin imagineer.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Find a museum location and measure its length and width.

2. Plan your display by sketching the space on your paper. Use scale to indicate size.

3. Place your collection on a table. Think about where you want to place each object in your exhibit. Don't make the space too cluttered.

4. Once you know where you want to place the objects in your exhibit, draw them on your pumpkin display plan.

5. Be sure to make up a title for the exhibit.

6. Write display signs for your collection. For the more interesting items, include brief descriptions and information such as where the object came from, its age, use, and monetary value.

7. Where possible, make part of the display interactive. For example, ask people to make designs with a large bowl of seeds; ask visitors to guess the weight of a large pumpkin.

8. Take a photo of the exhibit and keep it for next year.

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