

Carved & Unpainted Pumpkin Care

- 1) Keep damp! - a water filled spray bottle is very handy to keep close while carving a detailed design as well as prolonging its life when finished & on display with periodic spritzes.
- 2) Protect it - wrap with moistened paper towels or wet rags, then in plastic (all the way around the pumpkin to keep in place) in order to keep hydration locked in.
- 3) Refrigerate - when not on display, or in as cool as space as possible.
- 4) Don't put pumpkins in direct sun light or under hot lights if avoidable because as the pumpkin dehydrates, details begin to shrivel up and fine cuts begin to widen into larger gaps.
- 5) Alum diluted in a spray bottle (hydrated potassium aluminium sulfate) is a food preservative traditionally used on Thai fruit carving displays to keep them looking fresh looking, preventing dehydration, and still edible, which works well on pumpkins too.
- 6) Periodic applications of name brand household bath/kitchen cleaner or a spray bottle of 10% bleach solution (inside the pumpkin as well as the carved surfaces) prevents mold from developing or stops it from continuing to spread during the "life" of your completed squash sculpture.
- 7) I often soak my jack-o'-lantern designs overnight, submerged in a solution with soaps and/or salts for preservation, which can leave a powdery residue. A spray bottle with vegetable oil or application by brush can illuminate this or any dry appearance the pumpkin surface may have while simultaneously sprucing it up for photography. However, this does make a large, round, delicate object very slippery; don't plan on moving your art soon after an application.
- 8) Lighting - the quickest & easiest approach to internally light a design is usually cut a small hole in the back of your pumpkin (large enough to fit an electrical plug through). Most hardware stores carry clamp lamps and electrical/-duct putty for a few dollars. If one removes all the hard ware from the lamp and apply a generous hand full of putty around the socket & cord as a base, it makes a perfect 100 watt bulb (or energy saver equivalent) holder. The light must be kept stable, upright, sealed and out of any water that may collect in the bottom of the pumpkin. Squash this inside the bottom of your squash and your creation will glow.

*Leaving a dry towel in the bottom of the pumpkin overnight to soak up excess water, before lighting it, is a good safety precaution.

**Depending on how thick the pumpkin is/how much you cut away, some adjustments may be required; stronger lighting or shaving away more "flesh" from the inside may be necessary to let more light through.

*** There are a wide variety of optional L.E.D. and other types of lighting available on the market that can be more expensive, but may not be bright enough to see elaborate details.
- 9) Transportation- always stabilize your pumpkin whether in a car or cart. You don't want the delicately carved portion(s) to bump into any hard surfaces that can easily distort or destroy all the details that take so much time to carve. Grocery stores are always throwing out a lot of boxes designed specifically for transporting produce carefully and will give you as many as you want for FREE. Stuff extra bags, pieces of cardboard, rags around the base of the pumpkin when inside the box as an extra precaution. Also, old tires with a towel or blanket draped over them create an ideal "hammock" to prevent large pumpkins from rolling around in the bed of a truck.