



PUMPKIN CARVING TIPS

A carved pumpkin is a Halloween must for your porch—not only does it set the mood for the spookiest time of year, but it’s a way to show off your creative, artistic side. If you want to venture beyond the classic triangle eyes and toothy grin for your jack-o-lanterns but aren’t sure how don’t worry. These pumpkin carving ideas and tips will help you turn your plain pumpkins into works of art:

START WITH A TEMPLATE OR PRINTABLE PATTERN

A pattern is an easy way for beginners or children to start pumpkin carving. Knowing what you’re going to carve can also help you choose the right shape for your pumpkin. For example, a taller, skinnier pumpkin might work better for a shape like a haunted house or cat, while a shorter, rounder pumpkin would work well for a face.

PICK THE PERFECT CARVING PUMPKIN

Don’t just grab any old pumpkin from the grocery store. Your pumpkin will last longer and be easier to carve if you follow these tips:

- Choose one that has a strong, sturdy stem. A pumpkin gets its nutrients from the stem, which will help extend its life after carving.
- Skip pumpkins that have soft or bruised spots, which indicate they’ve already begun to decay.
- If you plan on carving intricate details, look for a pumpkin that is light in color and weight — this indicates a thinner rind, which is easier to carve.

CARVE LIKE A PRO

Here’s a tip from the pros you probably haven’t tried — cut a hole in the back or bottom of the pumpkin to scoop out the seeds and innards instead of cutting the top and using the stem as a handle. Remember, the stem provides nutrients to the pumpkin and will help it last longer.

MAKE YOUR PUMPKIN SHINE WITH CREATIVE LIGHTING

- This year, skip the tea light candles and illuminate your artwork with brighter, more creative lighting.
- Use battery-powered LED lights. They're brighter and last longer than candles, not to mention they're safer.
- Experiment with different colored lights for various effects; green, purple or multicolored lights work particularly well for jack-o-lanterns.
- Place a red bicycle light on "flash" mode and place it inside your pumpkin for an eerie strobe-light effect.
- You can also purchase special effect lights that blink or change colors from party stores.

KEEP YOUR PUMPKIN LOOKING (AND SMELLING) GREAT

Just a few simple steps can prolong the life of your pumpkin:

- When your pumpkin is not on display, wrap it tightly in plastic wrap to keep it fresh.
- If your pumpkin starts to wilt, soak it in a sink full of ice water with a capful of bleach for a few hours. This will help firm it up and also keep mold at bay.
- When displaying your pumpkin indoors, sprinkle the inside with nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon to create a delicious, all-natural air freshener.

Now use what you've learned and turn a ho-hum pumpkin into a festive front porch display this Halloween!

