

Pumpkin Planter DIY & Care Checklist

Use a real pumpkin as a removable-pot cover for a potted mum. Lift the nursery pot out to water and let it drain completely.

1. MATERIALS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Firm, unblemished pumpkin with a wide, stable flat base (no soft spots, cracks, or mold around the stem or bottom).
- ☐ Healthy potted garden mum (Chrysanthemum) in its original draining plastic nursery pot with plenty of buds showing color.
- ☐ Safe adult pumpkin-opening tool (serrated pumpkin saw or sturdy carving knife) + scoop or heavy metal kitchen spoon.
- ☐ Protective, non-slip work surface + clean cloth or paper towels + waterproof saucer/tray for wood porches or tables.

2. PUMPKIN AND MUM SIZE WORKSHEET (MEASURE BEFORE CUTTING)

Nursery Pot Top Rim Diameter: _____ in. Nursery Pot Base Diameter: _____ in. Nursery Pot Height: _____ in.

Pumpkin Width: _____ in. Interior Cavity Depth: _____ in. Target Top Opening Diameter: _____ in. (leave finger clearance)

Fit Check: ☐ Pumpkin sits flat without rocking ☐ Opening wide enough to lift pot without snapping mum stems

3. SAFETY PREPARATION CHECKLIST & 4. PUMPKIN HOLLOWING CHECKLIST

- ☐ [Safety] Adult-only cutting on a stable, non-slip table; wipe pumpkin skin dry so hands and tools cannot slip.
- ☐ [Safety] Trace cut line around the top shoulder first; cut with controlled strokes away from your stabilizing hand.
- ☐ [Hollowing] Remove top lid cleanly and scoop out seeds and loose stringy pulp with a sturdy spoon or scoop.
- ☐ [Hollowing] Leave 1 to 1.5 in. of firm structural pumpkin wall and floor intact (do not scrape rind paper-thin).
- ☐ [Hollowing] Skip bleach, borax, petroleum jelly, or chemical sprays-keep the gourd safe for plant roots and composting.

5. REMOVABLE-POT ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS & 6. WATERING AND DRAINAGE CHECKLIST

- ☐ [Assembly] Keep the mum in its original draining plastic nursery pot-do not pack loose soil into an undrained pumpkin.
- ☐ [Assembly] Lower the nursery pot into the hollow pumpkin; verify it sits level and lifts out easily without wedging.
- ☐ [Watering] Check soil moisture every 1-2 days (daily in warm/windy weather). When top inch feels dry, LIFT POT OUT of pumpkin.
- ☐ [Drainage] Water slowly at the base of the mum stems (never over flowers) until water runs freely from bottom drain holes.
- ☐ [Drainage] Let nursery pot finish draining for 10-15 minutes outside the gourd; wipe pumpkin cavity dry before returning pot.
- ☐ [Drainage] Never leave standing water in the pumpkin floor, and do not rely on bottom gravel as a substitute for drainage.

7. SITE & SUNLIGHT CHECKLIST | 8. SIGNS OF PUMPKIN DECAY | 9. WHAT TO DO WHEN SHELL SOFTENS

- ☐ [Site & Sunlight] Provide 6+ hours of bright sunlight (prefer morning sun + afternoon shelter); avoid deep shade or night security lights.
- ☐ [Site & Shelter] Set under a covered porch overhang to keep rainwater out of the pumpkin cavity; use a waterproof tray on wood/stone.
- ☐ [Signs of Decay] Watch for: soft or spongy base, sagging/slumping walls, weeping liquid at bottom, dark mold, or sour odor.
- ☐ [After Pumpkin Softens] Lift out the intact nursery pot immediately, move the mum to a standard pot or bed, and compost untreated pumpkin.

10. REMOVABLE-POT VS. DIRECT-PLANTING COMPARISON

Feature	Removable Nursery Pot Inside Pumpkin (Recommended)	Direct Planting Into Drained Pumpkin (Alternative)
Setup & Drainage	Keep mum in draining nursery pot; no holes cut in pumpkin	Drill bottom holes in pumpkin; fill cavity with potting mix
Watering & Care	Lift pot out, water at soil base, drain 10-15 min, return	Water in place; runoff & damp soil stay against pumpkin wall
Cleanup & Best Use	Lift clean pot out in seconds; best for porch mum displays	Must dig roots out of decaying gourd; short weekend displays

11. DAILY OR PERIODIC SHELL-INSPECTION TRACKER & 12. BLANK NOTES AND OBSERVATION DATES

Observation Date	Mum Soil Moisture	Watered Outside Shell?	Pumpkin Base & Walls	Action / Blank Notes
___/___/20__	☐ Moist ☐ Dry	☐ Yes (drained 15m)	☐ Firm ☐ Softening	_____
___/___/20__	☐ Moist ☐ Dry	☐ Yes (drained 15m)	☐ Firm ☐ Softening	_____
___/___/20__	☐ Moist ☐ Dry	☐ Yes (drained 15m)	☐ Firm ☐ Softening	_____
___/___/20__	☐ Moist ☐ Dry	☐ Yes (drained 15m)	☐ Firm ☐ Softening	_____

BLANK NOTES, DISPLAY START/REPLACEMENT DATES & VERIFIED HORTICULTURAL SOURCES (ZERO AFFILIATE LINKS)

Start Date: _____ Shell Replaced / Composted Date: _____ Notes: _____

Illinois Extension - Making the most of fall mums: <https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/garden-scoop/2026-10-29-making-most-fall-mums>

MSU Extension - Use mums to keep fall landscapes bright: <https://extension.msstate.edu/news/southern-gardening/2022/use-mums-keep-fall-landscapes-bright>

Thrive (<https://www.thrive.org.uk/get-gardening/pumpkin-planters>) | Garden Gate | Costa Farms