

# Plant Oddity: Pumpkins on a Stick

by Karen Woodring

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

10/20/2025

These little cuties are ornamental eggplants, *Solanum integrifolium*, and so fun to grow if you have just the right spot for them. They need sun, their 'personal space', and support. Fertilize them as you would tomatoes. I start mine under grow lights from the previous year's seeds about 6 weeks before the last frost.

Every year, I try to find the perfect spot for them at my house since their thorns rival roses. They make excellent trap plants, so I plant them close (but not TOO close) to my vegetable garden. This year, I tried placing four plants together to support each other against a sunny fence. I added a piece of wire fencing, and we still managed a few scratches as we passed through the gate next to them. Lesson learned!

They are ready to harvest in about 65-70 days. Cut the branches long and carefully remove all the leaves. I like to cure mine in the garage on a mesh tray for a bit. They will continue to ripen after being cut, so make sure to harvest before a frost hits.

Pumpkins on a stick are edible and used in stir-fry (although I never have). To be edible, you would need to harvest when their skin is shiny green. As they turn reddish orange, they become bitter-tasting. I grow them for ornamental purposes, and they become their own seed holders for next year's crop!



Photo by Karen Woodring

## References:

<https://cutflowers.ces.ncsu.edu/capsicum-pumpkin-on-a-stick/>

<https://www.thespruce.com/pumpkin-on-a-stick-plant-4773067>