



Pumpkin Planting

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Art by Sally Springer

“I’m ready!” Emmy bounced up and down in her rubber boots. Finally, finally it was warm enough to start the garden!

Last winter, Emmy had helped choose seeds from the shiny catalog: dinosaur kale, purple beans, and best of all, tiny pumpkins. She had waited for the seeds to come in the mail. She had waited for the snow to melt and the dirt to warm. Now it was time to plant!

But Mom said, “I can’t find my sun hat.”

Mama said, “Let me finish my tea.”

Emmy took deep breaths: one, two, three.
“Can I wait outside, then?”

“Of course, if you stay where we can see you.”

Outside, Emmy ran up and down the garden. Last year, she used to come here for snacks of purple beans or dinosaur kale. Now there was nothing but dirt. The sun was hot, and she wished she had a juicy bean to bite.



Finally, finally her mothers came out with the seeds.
Emmy rushed to grab her packet of pumpkin seeds.

Last year, there had been no tiny pumpkins. Her
mothers grew big pie pumpkins every year, but no
one had chosen tiny pumpkins before Emmy.

“Wait!” Mama picked up the other seed packets that Emmy had spilled in her hurry. “We have to get the ground ready.”

Emmy took deep breaths: one, two, three. Then she helped dig the dirt to make nice, soft beds for her seeds. She balanced carefully on the path between the beds, so that her feet wouldn’t squish the dirt back down and make it hard again.

While she worked, she thought about how she would load up her wagon with pumpkins in the fall. She thought about letting each of her friends pick out a cute pumpkin of their own.



When the digging was done, Mama measured where all the different plants should go. With a black marker, Mom wrote on the very first label stake: TINY PUMPKINS. Emmy ran to stick the stake into the ground where Mama pointed. Then she ran back for the next stake and the next, until there was a place for every kind of seed.

Finally, finally she tore open her packet of pumpkin seeds. There were ten white seeds inside. They were bigger than the green pumpkin seeds from the store that Emmy sometimes ate.

“Will these really grow tiny pumpkins?” Emmy asked. “I thought the seeds would be smaller. And more cute.”

“They definitely will,” Mom said. “They’ll each grow long vines with many tiny pumpkins. Let’s put half of the seeds back to save for next year.”





“But Mom!” Emmy held her ten seeds tightly. “I want to plant them ALL!” Oops. She was yelling. Mom frowned at her, getting ready to say no.

Emmy closed her eyes and remembered to take deep breaths: one, two, three. “Please can we plant them all? I want to grow lots so I can share with everyone.”

Mama said, “But where will we put ten big pumpkin plants?”

Emmy swallowed. She imagined her wagon loaded with pumpkins. “Well, I guess we could plant fewer beans and dinosaur kale.”

Mom and Mama looked at each other. “That seems fair,” Mom said after a moment. “And we could plant fewer melons, since I’m the only one of us who really likes them.”

Mama said, “We could plant less cilantro, too, since I’m the only one of us who really likes that. Let’s draw a new garden plan.”

While Mom and Mama talked about “row feet” and did math, Emmy put her seeds down to wait. Then she lay down in the soft dirt next to them. She pretended she was a waiting seed, too, wishing for rain. She got up again and got a drink from Mom’s water bottle.

Finally, finally Mama called, “Time to plant!”

Emmy ran over. Mama helped her measure a long, long row for the pumpkins. Then Emmy tucked in her ten pumpkin seeds all by herself, smoothing their blankets of dirt just like her mothers did when they tucked her into bed.





Mama brought the full watering can, cold and heavy. Emmy gripped it with both hands and gave each of her seeds a good drink.

Mama said, “Remember, they’re going to have to rest in the ground for days before we see them start to grow.”

“I know,” said Emmy. “I’m very practiced at waiting.” She patted the dirt over her pumpkin seeds one more time. Then she ran to help Mom plant purple beans. ☺

Tiny Pumpkins

