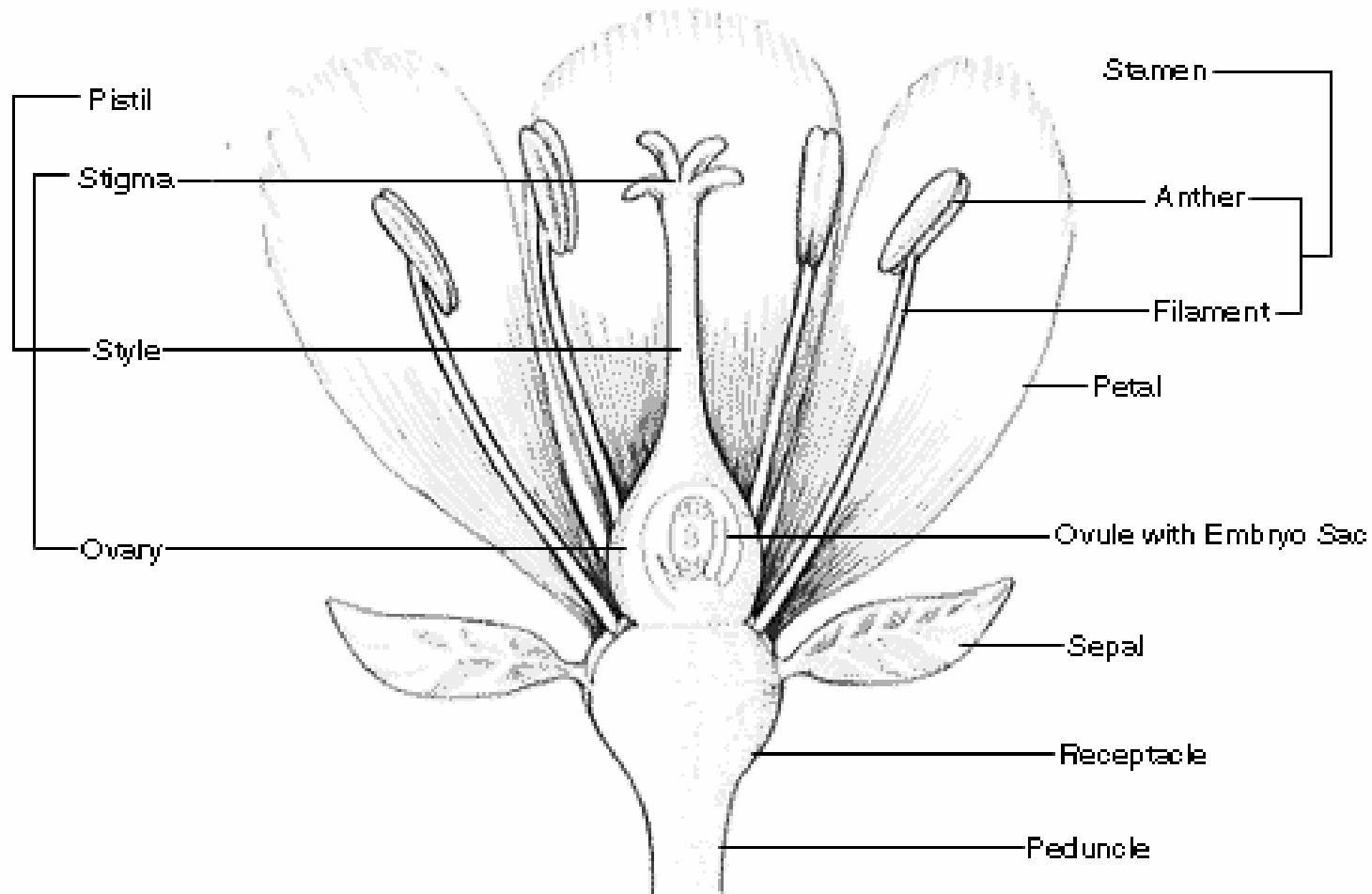


How to Pollinate a Pumpkin

by Betsy Langford

Quick terminology review



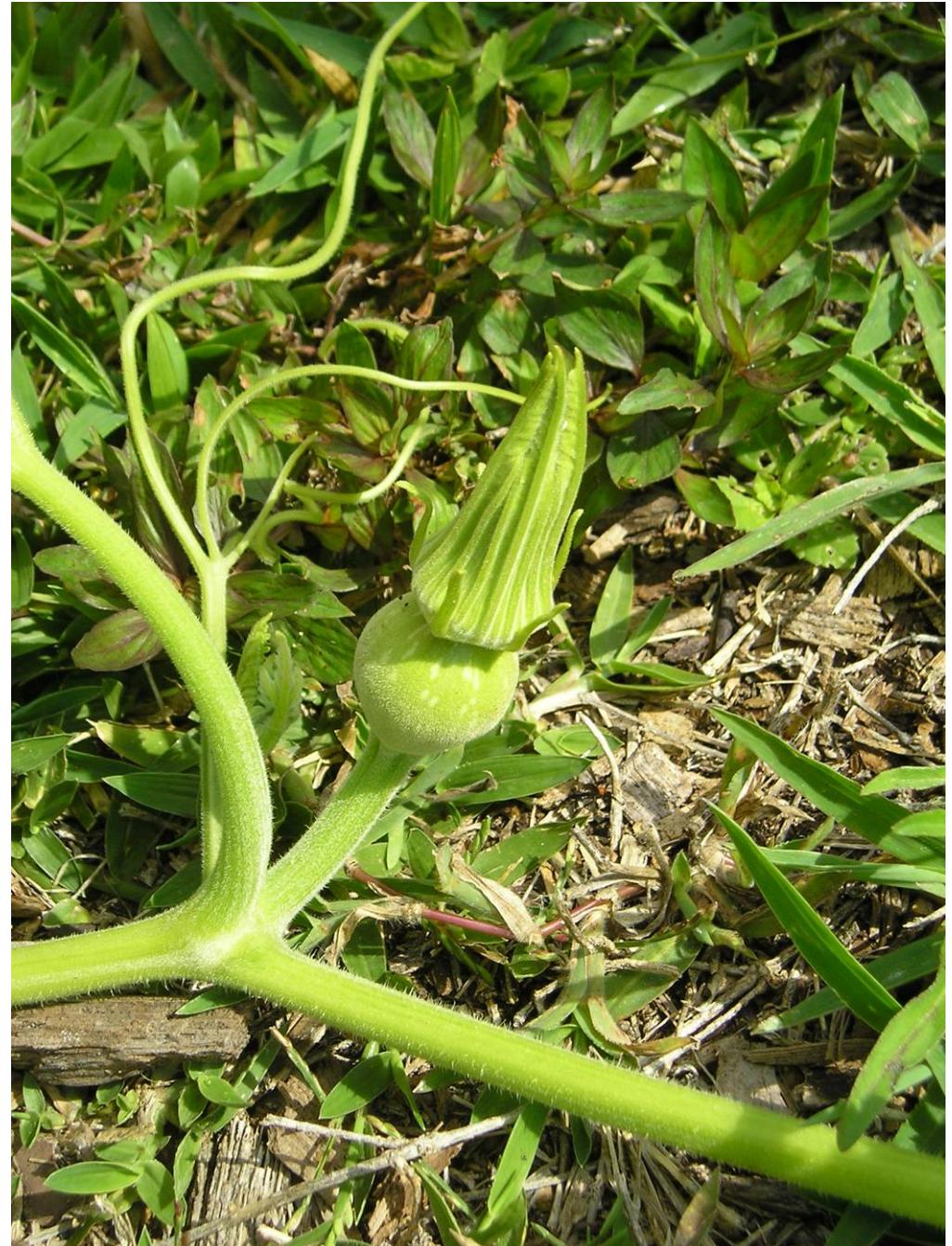


female

male

Pumpkins are monoecious, which means they have separate male and female flowers on the same plant. Female flowers can be differentiated from the male by the swollen ovary beneath the petals.

The day before hand-pollinating, look for male and female flowers, almost ready to open.



Tape the male and female flowers shut so that no one else will contaminate or do the pollinating before you. (Masking tape works great.) It is good to have some sort of flag or marker so you can find the flower later.



When you come back the following day and untape the flower, it should naturally open.

Note: Pollination should be done in the morning hours, before it gets too hot. This is when the flower naturally opens.





Find the male flower
you taped previously
and pull it from the
vine.



Pull off the petals so that the stamen will easily fit into the female flower. You should be able to see that the pollen is powdery and easily able to come off.



The male stamen is now ready to pollinate the female pistil.



Gently brush the stamen
onto the stigma.



The stigma has a sticky surface and you want to brush the pollen evenly to ensure fertilization and the growth of well-shaped fruit

Retape the petals closed to keep anyone from adding contaminated pollen to your newly pollinated flower.



It is wise to label the flower so you know which pumpkins you can collect seed from. This allows you to also keep track of which plant pollinated which when breeding for specific attributes.



Within a couple days the flower will wilt and soon the the ovary will begin to swell if fertilization had occurred. Otherwise, it will abort, shriveling up and falling off the vine.

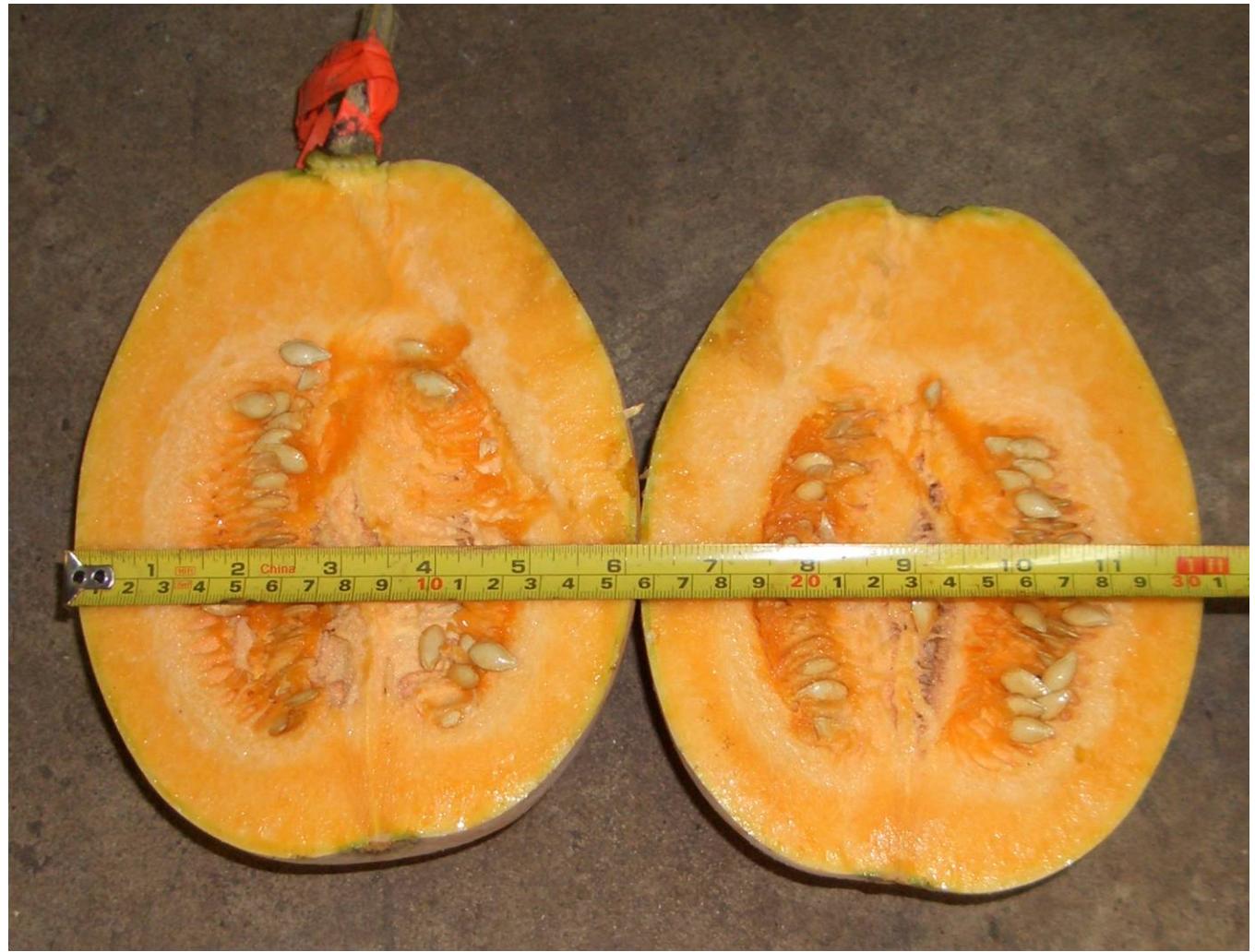




The pumpkin will
quickly grow in size.



Before long you'll be
ready for harvest.



Now you can collect
your seeds to plant
next season.

Happy Pollinating!

