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Ida Marie Henrietta's First Garden

Ida Marie Henrietta lived on a farm and more than anything wanted to grow her very own pumpkin. It had been a long, cold winter but at last, the earth and air were warm enough for planting. Father had already prepared the soil for the garden and cornfield.

"Mother, may I have my very own garden?" begged Ida Marie Henrietta, swinging her old, worn doll by its hand. "I want my own pumpkin for Halloween."

"That is a splendid idea," replied Ida Marie Henrietta's mother. "If you will help me with this string and these sticks to make even rows, I will give you a piece of the garden for planting a hill of pumpkins." Mother gave her a patch near the fence of the cornfield Father was planting.

Later that day, Mother reached up in the cupboard and pulled down a tin can. Inside were dried pumpkin seeds from last year's crop of pumpkins. She gave Ida Marie Henrietta a handful of seeds.

"Oh! My own pumpkin seeds!" squealed Ida Marie Henrietta. She placed them carefully on the kitchen table and made a pumpkin shape with the seeds. When the table was needed for dinner, she put the seeds in her pocket. During dinner, she reached in her pocket to feel the seeds. Yes, they were still there. She couldn't wait to plant them!

That night, Ida Marie Henrietta fell asleep in the overstuffed chair. She was so sleepy that she did not remember that Father carried her to bed and Mother changed her into her pajamas.

The next day, Ida Marie Henrietta awakened to the pounding of rain on the roof. Oh, no! She would have to stay inside today! She climbed out of bed. *At least I have my pumpkin seeds*, she thought. She hunted for her clothes. No dress! She was frantic. She could not find her seeds! She ran to Mother crying, "My seeds are gone!"

“Why don’t you look on the shelf by the washtubs,” suggested Mother.

Ida Marie Henrietta scampered to the back porch and found her seeds. Mother had emptied the pockets before washing her clothes.

It rained all day. Ida Marie Henrietta was disappointed, but she amused herself with her dolls and books.

The next day, Mother was planting the garden when Ida Marie Henrietta awoke. She dressed hurriedly and dashed to her garden plot to plant her seeds.

She watched Mother carefully. Mother made a hill of the earth with the hoe. Then she dropped a few seeds on the hill and covered them with more earth.

The hoe was too big for Ida Marie Henrietta, so she made a hill by scooping the earth with her hands. Then she dropped some seeds and covered them with the earth just like Mother. Perhaps eight or nine seeds dropped. *More seeds, more pumpkins*, she thought. She scattered earth on top of them with her fingers. She couldn’t wait for them to grow.

The next day, she went to check her seeds. Nothing! She dug around in the earth with her hands until she found some seeds. Ida Marie Henrietta looked at her mother and sadly reported, “I have no pumpkins!”

“Dear, it will take one to two weeks to see a little sprout,” assured her mother.

Two days later a *big* thunderstorm came. The wind blew hard, and it rained heavily all night. And the next day too ...

Ida Marie Henrietta bolted out the door to check the pumpkins the next morning. The sun was shining, and the birds were chirping and flying over the garden.

“*Caw! Caw!*” A monstrous crow flew over her head. She scoured the patch for pumpkin plants. Nothing yet!

In almost two weeks, Mother’s pumpkin seeds began to sprout, just as she had said they would. Each plant had two little seed leaves that looked like low-flying butterflies. *But where are my plants?* thought Ida Marie Henrietta.

In a week, another larger and jagged leaf appeared on Mother’s plants.

Ida Marie Henrietta was positive her pumpkins would begin to grow. One day she chased a cottontail rabbit hopping over her garden. She dug around the earth

where she remembered planting her seeds. She poked and jabbed but found no seeds. She was so sad. Where had her seeds gone?

"Mr. Rabbit, did you eat my pumpkin seeds?" she asked. The rabbit paid no attention to her and hopped under the wooden fence.

Meanwhile, Mother's patch of pumpkins grew two more large leaves. Then many stems and vines and some curly tendrils appeared on the vines. Ida Marie Henrietta wondered what had happened to her seeds.

"*Caw! Caw!*" called the big black crow.

"Was it you?" she shouted. "Did you take my seeds?"

All summer, the vines grew and grew. They became very heavy and strong. The plants seemed to join together and enormous leaves were covering the entire patch. Little yellow flowers appeared between the leaves and tendrils. Bees buzzed from flower to flower. Ida Marie Henrietta helped her mother hoe the garden. A chipmunk scurried past.

"You, chipmunk! You dug up the seeds and ate them!" she said.

Some days later, an amazing thing happened! Little green bulbs peeked out from under the yellow flowers. "Look, Ida Marie Henrietta! These are baby pumpkins!" exclaimed Mother.

The tiny green pumpkins grew and grew.

Finally, the pumpkins were plump and orange and ready to be picked.

Ida Marie Henrietta helped Mother load the pumpkins into a cart. Father came in from plowing the fields for next year's crops and hauled the cart to the house. *There are enough pumpkins for everyone in the world to have a jack-o'-lantern*, she thought.

"I'll be certain to have enough pumpkin seeds next year with all these pumpkins!" Ida Marie Henrietta laughed.

"And plenty of pumpkin for pies!" exclaimed Father. With a twinkle in his eye, he added, "Ida Marie Henrietta, I want you to come to the field that I'm plowing and help me do something."

They crossed over the wooden fence to the other side of the garden. Tall stalks of corn remained because they were too close to the fence to be cut.

Nestled in those towering corn stalks just opposite of Ida Marie Henrietta's garden plot were pumpkins galore! And ... one gigantic pumpkin! It was so enormous that Father could not put his arms around it! He laid the cart on the ground and rolled the pumpkin into it.

"How do you like your pumpkins?" asked Father.

"How did my pumpkins get over here?" asked Ida Marie Henrietta.

"I suspect the heavy rains washed the seeds," said Father, smiling.

"Will you help me make a jack-o-lantern for Halloween?" asked

Ida Marie Henrietta. Some days later, Father helped her create a huge jack-o'-lantern. They cut, scooped, and saved the seeds to plant next year.





