

# FREE FORM PUMPKIN

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## Yarn Along the Rockies 2018

### MATERIALS

The following made a pumpkin about 40 inches in circumference and 8 inches high.

6 oz of fiber (3 oz of multi colored handspun and 1 oz each of 3 colors that coordinate with the hand spun was used in the example)

Crochet hook to fit the fiber used

Knitting needles to fit the fiber used

Yarn needle

Coordinating 1/2 yard of material

Fiber fill 12 oz bag, maybe 2

Sewing needle/thread

Hot glue gun/glue

Pumpkin stem

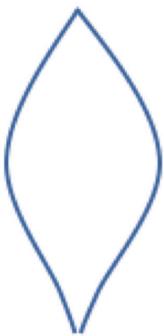


FIGURE 1

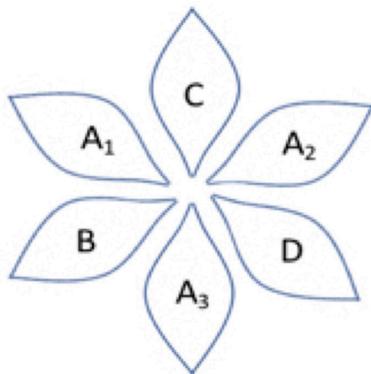


FIGURE 2

## FREE FORM PUMPKIN

### Step 1: Choose fibers

The pumpkin is constructed by creating 6 "petals" (Figure 1), and it is up to you as the artist to choose the color and textures for your personal pumpkin. I usually use 4 colors in my pumpkins. 3 petals are an amazing "star" skein of multicolor hand spun (A), and then three different coordinating colors and textures to complement the star (B, C, D). I usually start working the multicolor petals to get the best feel for the colors, then tweak my complementing colors if necessary as the petals build in their relationship to each other. Fibers can be any weight or material when working the free form way. Figure 2 is the petal color distribution.

### Step 2: Make 6 "petals"

The six petals should be roughly the same size and can be knit or crocheted to your preference. How large to make the petals depends on the size pumpkin you want to create. Do you want a larger one for your hearth? A small one for a place card holder at a table setting? Several sizes for a grouping? If "winging" a petal makes you nervous, one can cut out a petal template out of scrap fabric or paper. If using amazingly cool handspun, I decide the size of the pumpkin by taking my star skein of handspun and making a petal that uses about 1/3 of the skein (A1), then 1/3 for the second petal (A2), and the third petal (A3) uses up any remaining fiber so may be bigger or smaller than the others. DO NOT weave in the 4" tails as you work the petals. Reminder: the petals DO NOT need to be exactly the same height or width!!!! It is the difference in the petals created by the elasticity of various stitches and chosen fibers that helps each pumpkin grow into that desired "realistic" organic and unique creation!

If crocheting, chain three. Work 2 HDC in third ch from hook (3 HDC). Work 2 HDC into each edge of the row when widening your petal. When creating a petal, I usually HDC the handspun petals (A1, A2, A3) as crochet works up so fast and I like the way the color displays in this fuller looking stitch.



If knitting, cast on three stitches. Knit across the 3 stitches. I usually knit the three complementary petals (B, C, D) for the texture change. Simple garter stitch, seed stitch, and stacked seed stitch are nice choices.

If one increases every row, then the petal will get very wide very quickly, creating a squat pumpkin. The more rows worked even between increase rows, the narrower and more tapered the petal, creating a more upright pumpkin shape. While working increase rows, imagine coming up from the bottom and working your way to the side of the pumpkin. When one feels they are at the side of the pumpkin, start working even rows to build height. With very small pumpkins one may not need to do more than one even row for the side. For a larger pumpkin, working several inches even may be desired. When the side is complete, start decrease rows. Knit or crochet two stitches together at either end of the row, reversing the process used for increasing. It is not desired to have the petals be identical in shape and size, nor to have either end of the same petal have the same rate of increases to even rows worked. Think free form, think approximates.

### Step 3: Combine petals

To start, take two petals. How about petal A1 and B? With right sides facing, use the crochet hook to join as follows. Start at the bottom of the two petals. Insert the crochet through the edge of petal B, and catch the edge of petal A1, drawing through the Petal B edge. Now catch up the edge of petal B and draw through the loop of the petal A edge. Keep alternating catching up the edge stitches until at the top of the petal. Use the tails to draw through the final loop and secure. It is now ok to weave in loose ends as you join the petals. Take up petal A2 and start joining to B using the same alternating edge technique. As you are working the joins, work in the tails. As you are joining, you can make adjustments as need to avoid bunching or stretching effects.

Join all the petals per your schematic (Figure 2) until the final petal is joined completely on one side and 2/3 the way up the other side. I usually use the crochet hook itself to hold the "pause" in the joining process.

### Step 4: Stuff the pumpkin

Insert the fabric into the pumpkin cavity so the center of the square is approximately over the bottom join of the six petals. Stuff in fiber fill until sides of the pumpkin are bulging out and at a desired level of squishiness. There will be some compression, so err on the side of a few handfuls more. While stuffing, adjust fabric folds so no fiber fill is peeking out. Use the needle and thread to secure folds and fasten corners together if it seems this will help fabric from unfolding or slipping.

### Step 5: Seal up the pumpkin

Now that the pumpkin is stuffed, continue to seam up the final third of the remaining seam. The final tails will not only secure the final join, you can use them and a yarn needle to help secure the upper joins and minimize the size of the upper 6 petal join. Do not worry if the top petals do not all "perfectly" align and a bit of fabric is showing. The stem will cover that hole.

### Step 6: Attach the stem

Using a stem from a real pumpkin, hot glue to the stem to the top of your fiber pumpkin. You will need to hold the stem pressed in place until the glue sets. Finishing options could include adding felted leaves, knitting a stem, or top stitching patterns onto the pumpkin petals. This is your free form project, so you will know what you want to do before declaring your pumpkin complete!!!

