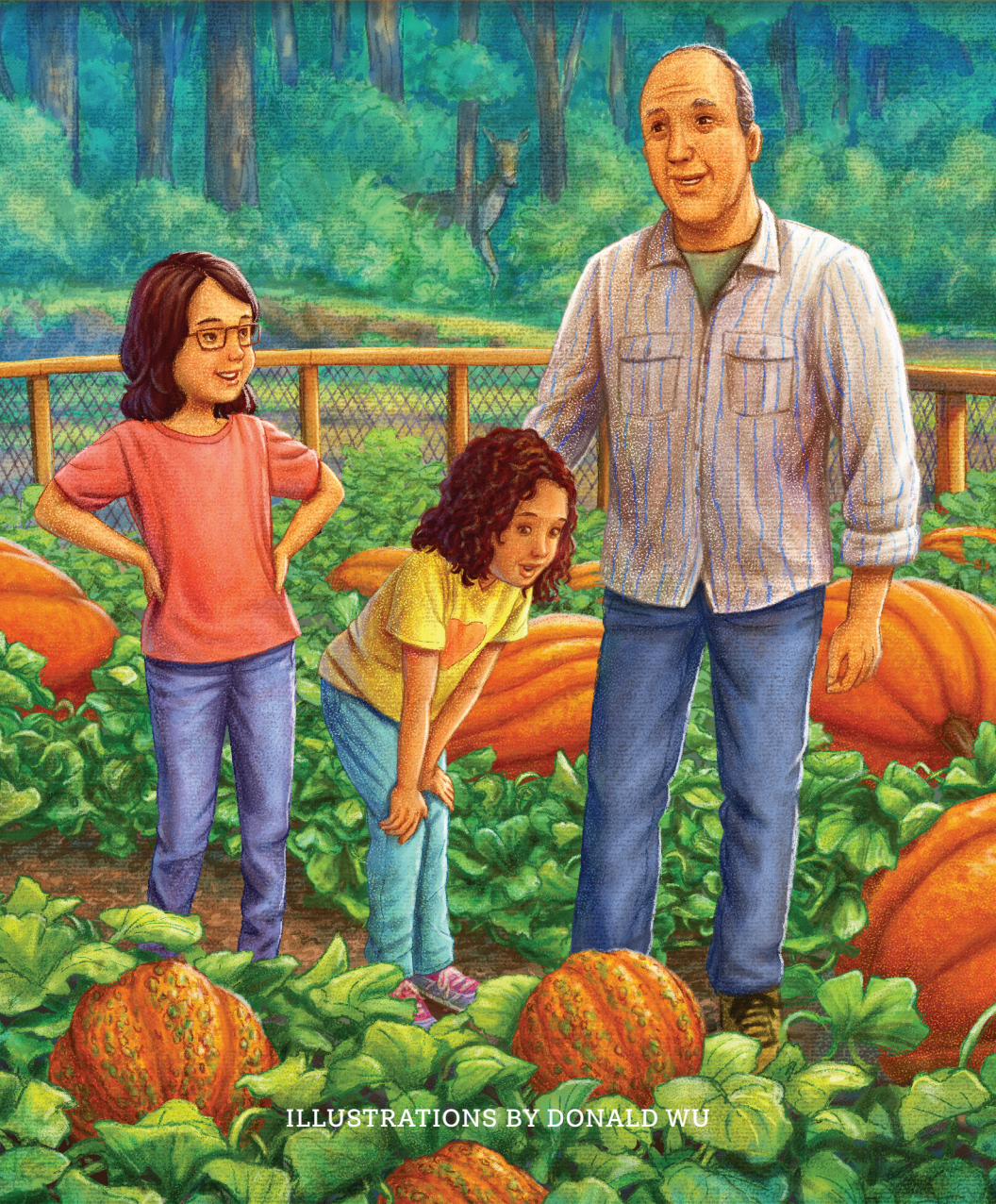


# The Prized Pumpkin

by Rick Henningfeld



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DONALD WU





**The My Little Ag Me Book Series** is designed to introduce agricultural careers to youth. Our hope is the stories create curiosity around the highlighted careers and thought processes professionals and hobbyists use to complete their work.

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# The Prized Pumpkin

by Rick Henningfeld

Illustrations by Donald Wu



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For my curious kids who seek to learn by doing!

Love you,

R.D.H.





## **Book Vocabulary:**

### **Cultivar** (n):

Plant variety that has been produced using selective breeding.

### **Greenhouse** (n):

Structure in which plants are grown that need protection from cold weather.

### **Vine** (n):

Long slender stem that trails along the ground as the plant grows.

### **Nutrient** (n):

A substance that provides what is needed for growth and continued life.

### **Pollinate** (v):

Move pollen to and from flowers to fertilize the seeds.

## **Highlighted Careers:**

### **Agronomist**

An expert in the science of crop production and soil management.

### **Beekeeper**

A person who owns and cares for bees.

# Chapter 1:

## A Friendly Competition

I don't know about you, but winter seemed to feel like forever this past year! I remember the first nice day of spring; that was the day this whole thing started. It was a typical Saturday morning at my house. I woke up to the smell of pancakes and headed to the dining room table. I was extra excited because my best friend, Jade, was coming over to play later. My dad, already sitting at the table, had a stack of magazines in front of him. He was paging through one of them. I asked him what he was looking at. "Seed catalogs, a whole bunch came in the mail this week!" He said, circling things in the magazine with a marker. We have a garden each summer, and my dad always got excited to pick out the seeds. I never really understood his excitement. But after what happened this summer, I get it; growing plants is not easy, especially pumpkins, take it from me!

Oh, by the way, hey, I'm Tori. Actually, it's Victoria, but all my friends call me Tori. And for the past three months, my best friend Jade and I have been competing to see who could grow the most prized pumpkin! It all started this past spring when Jade came over.

“What are these? I thought magazines only sold clothes and dog beds?” Jade asked when she saw the catalogs Dad left on the table.

“These are seed catalogs! You can look at different kinds of tomatoes, peppers, peas, beans, and broccoli!” Tori said.

“BROCCOLI? Yuck, who’d ever want to have that growing in their yard? Maybe it would ward off vampires.”

“That’s garlic, Jade!”

“I don’t know. It might be broccoli too.” Replied Jade.

“I love broccoli, especially with cheese. You liked our fresh peas from the garden last year.” I replied.

“Yea, those were so good. I never knew fresh veggies could taste so delicious. Mmm, let’s grow some more peas!” Jade grabbed one of the catalogs and started to look for peas, but then stopped suddenly, turning the magazine excitedly toward me. “Tori! Look at these! Who knew there were so many kinds of pumpkins?”

I looked over and saw all the pictures. There were a lot of different kinds. We began reading the descriptions, and at about the same time, my dad walked in and saw us looking at the pumpkins in the catalog.

“Hey, girls! Are you looking at the pumpkins? Hmm, those can be tricky to grow.”

“Oh, please, Dad! We have some extra space in the garden, and we were going to try something new! Why not pumpkins?”

“Hmm, I was thinking about broccoli.”

“NO, NO, Mr. Perez! Pumpkins would be great! So perfect for fall decorations! We would plant them ourselves!” Jade quickly answered back.

“I’ve got to get her to try broccoli with cheese. I know she will change her mind!” I thought.

“Alright. How about you pick the **cultivar**, or kind of pumpkin, we should grow and add it to my order. Then, you two can oversee growing the pumpkins this year.” Dad responded.

Now that Jade and I were in charge of the pumpkins, we began paging through the catalog to try to find the best seeds. “Look at these! They are so strange looking. Super weird colors and bumpy wart marks on all of them. Soooo weird. Let’s grow these.” I said, pointing to some seeds.

“What about the giant pumpkin? Look how massive it is! We should grow this one.” Jade added. We stared at each other from across the table. We didn’t agree, and I was starting to feel a little nervous. I didn’t want to disagree with my best friend! But I also really wanted to plant the bumpy pumpkins. “I bet we could grow the bumpiest pumpkins ever!” I tried to convince her.

“...and I bet we could grow the BIGGEST pumpkins ever!” she replied.

“Why don’t we grow both?” Dad added. “Jade, you can be in charge of growing your giant pumpkins, and Tori, you will be in charge of the warty ones.” And that’s where it started, a friendly competition.



# Chapter 2:

## Pumpkin Growing Research

My dad ordered the seeds. He told us it would be a few weeks until we would get them and a few more weeks until we would want to plant them outside. But we were ready to plant pumpkins that day! We spent the afternoon researching how to grow the best pumpkins. I bet we watched 100 videos online! We saw people building greenhouses, creating watering systems, and adding fertilizer and other things to the soil. Some people cut or buried the vines. Others picked off flowers, and others even removed pumpkins that started to grow, and said we had to do this to grow the biggest pumpkin ever! The more we watched, the more we realized there are a lot of ways to grow pumpkins and a lot of things to figure out.

Just before Jade was going to head home for the day, my dad came in and said, “I want to show you where you’ll be growing your pumpkins; follow me.” We walked to the backyard, and my dad pointed to two flags he had put in the ground; one said Jade, one said Tori. They were on opposite sides of the yard, nowhere near the normal garden.

I asked, “Why are they so far apart?”

My dad responded, “Pumpkins take a lot of space to grow. Each spot gets the same amount of sun, and I will prepare the space for you, so it’s ready to plant in June.”

I asked if I could build a greenhouse for mine, and Jade asked if she could set up an automatic watering system. Dad chuckled and said, “You two must have been doing your research! How about this? Both of you create a plan for how you want to raise your pumpkins over the next two weeks. You can share your plans with me, and we’ll see what we can do.”

Then my dad walked away. Jade and I liked that idea. We agreed to make a plan for our pumpkins and then share it with my dad in two weeks. Jade jumped on her bike and headed home.

# Chapter 3:

## The Plan!

That night I continued watching videos on growing pumpkins and began to write down my ideas in a journal. I knew I could grow pumpkins better than Jade. She hadn't worked in gardens before, and I helped my dad every year in the garden. My pumpkins were going to be awesome. I was creating the best plan ever!

The next morning, I showed Dad my journal filled with ideas for growing pumpkins. I also included some sketches of a greenhouse and an automatic watering system. I was so excited to get started on all these projects!

Dad said, "Tori, this is great! I'm glad to see your excitement about the garden. You have a lot of notes here about a lot of different things. Do you think Jade is doing this much research?"

I wasn't sure, but knowing Jade and how excited she was about big pumpkins, she had to be creating a plan too. Dad continued, "I have a friend that is an **agronomist**. She works with farmers when they are planning to plant their crops, or have issues during the growing season, helping them plan to grow the best crop possible. Her name is Ms. Amy, and I will see if she'd be willing to come out and meet with you

and Jade to help you plan.”

I remember thinking, “What could Ms. Amy help me with? I’ve already watched hours of video and have a plan.”

Dad continued, “Until then, why don’t you try to organize your notes into what you need to do first, second, third, and then you can share them with Ms. Amy.”

That afternoon, Jade came over to play. And I found out my hunch was right; she had started a journal too, with ideas for her pumpkin patch.

“Are you going to show me your plans?” I asked Jade one day.

“Hmm...are you going to show me your plans?” she asked back. I could tell that our friendly competition was still on!

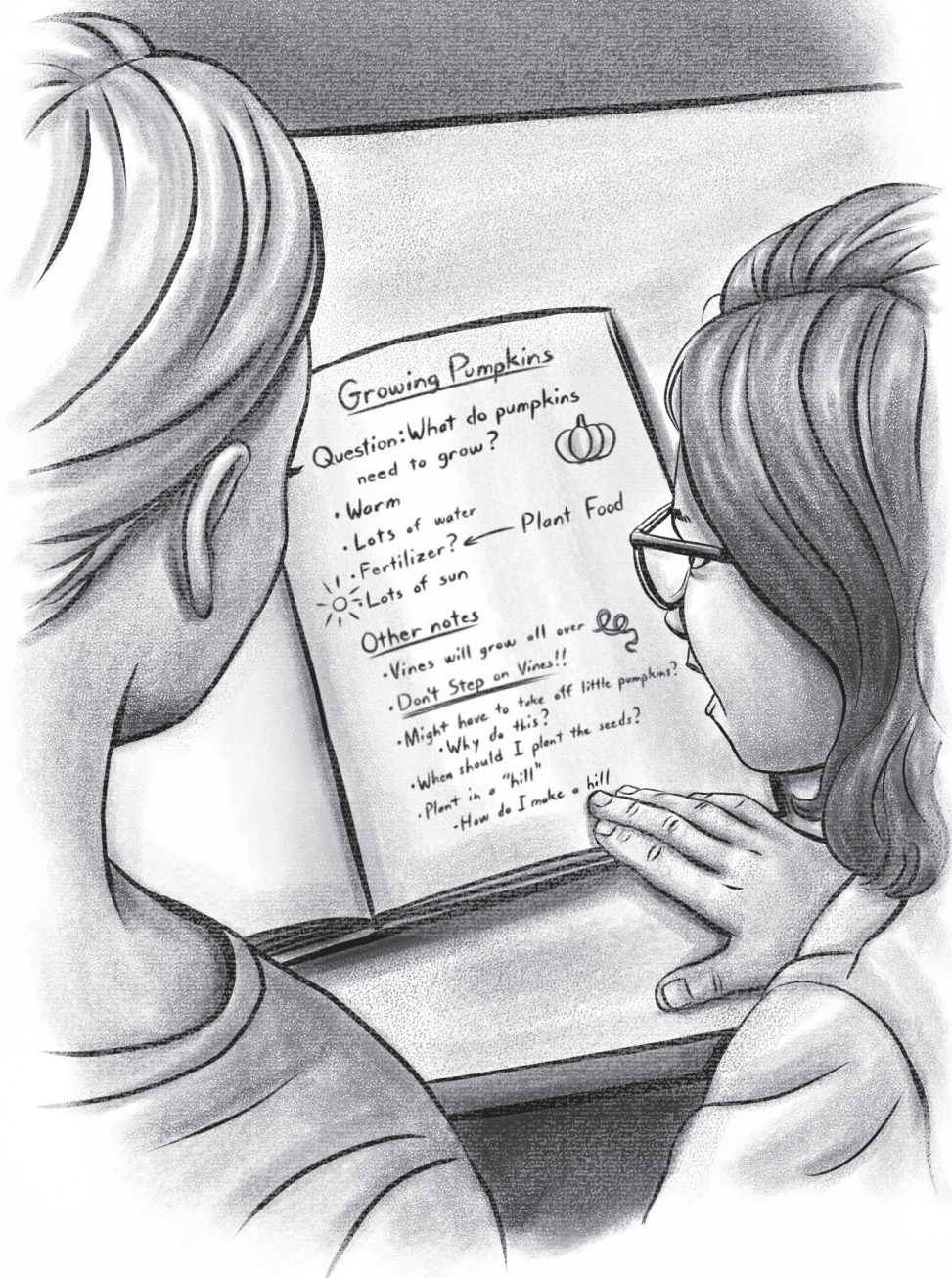
“Well, both of us are going to get to show our plans to Ms. Amy, the agronomist,” I explained that Ms. Amy’s job was to help farmers plan their crops, and this made Jade extra excited. She couldn’t wait to impress Ms. Amy with her ideas. It made me even more curious about what she was planning.

Two weeks after my dad placed the order, the seeds came in the mail! I called Jade, and she rode her bike over right away. We were both ready to plant our pumpkin seeds. Jade and I ran outside to find my dad, who was standing in the backyard with a lady I had never met. As we ran up to my dad, he said, “Girls, this is Ms. Amy, the agronomist! She’s excited to help you plan for your pumpkin growing challenge.”


Ms. Amy said, “Your dad told me you each want to raise the most prized pumpkins, and he showed me where your patches are. He also said you have both planned a lot, would you mind telling me about your plans?”


Jade and I took turns going inside with Ms. Amy to tell her about our plans, so we could keep them a secret. When it was my turn, I showed Ms. Amy my journal. “Wow! You certainly have a lot of ideas. Why don’t you think about breaking your plans into growth phases for the pumpkins? So that you have a plan for every step of the way.”






## Growing Pumpkins

Question: What do pumpkins need to grow? 

- Warm
- Lots of water
- Fertilizer? ← Plant Food
- Lots of sun 

### Other notes

- Vines will grow all over 
- Don't Step on Vines!!
- Might have to take off little pumpkins?
  - Why do this?
- When should I plant the seeds?
- Plant in a "hill"
- How do I make a hill

None of the videos I watched talked about this, so I was interested!

Ms. Amy said, “Your first phase should be preparing the soil and getting the pumpkin patch ready to plant.” I was confused because Dad already chose the spot. Ms. Amy must have noticed a confused look on my face and continued, “The patches chosen for your pumpkins are good because they get a lot of sun, but we should see if the soil has the right nutrients for pumpkins.” Ms. Amy continued to explain, “I’ll help you take a soil sample, and I can run tests to measure the nutrients the soil has available for the pumpkins. Would you like that?”

“Yes! I want my soil to be the best, so I can have the most prized pumpkins!” I said excitedly. My bumpy pumpkins were going to ROCK.

“Haha, well, I will test Jade’s soil, too!”

Ms. Amy helped us take a small sample of soil in each patch and put it in a small plastic bag. She wrote on the bags “Tori Patch” and “Jade Patch.” Ms. Amy said she would have results back in two weeks, which I thought was kind of weird because I was going to plant the pumpkins today!

# Chapter 4:

## Time to Plant the Pumpkins!

After Ms. Amy left, Jade and I grabbed our seed packets and headed out the back door to plant them. Dad caught us and said, “What are you girls doing?”

“Planting pumpkins!” We both yelled together.

Dad chuckled and said, “It’s too early to plant the pumpkins. The soil is still too cold. And if they do start to grow, we could still get a cold night that would freeze the young plants, and they would die.” Jade and I looked at each other and sighed. Who knew planting and growing involved so much waiting? And waiting isn’t easy when you’re excited! I think he could see how sad we were, and he said, “How about this, you each take five seeds and plant them. If they live, great, but if not, you will still have seeds to plant later.”

“YES!” We both shouted and took off to plant them! Our patches were sort of far apart, but I could still see Jade making a hill of soil and planting all her seeds in the hill about one inch deep. I was doing it the same way, just like we had learned in our research. We both carefully

planted the seeds and then watered them with anticipation of what would grow!

Every afternoon Jade and I would meet in the backyard to check out the pumpkins, but nothing was happening. We checked every day for a whole week! Dad told me we probably wouldn't see anything come out of the ground for ten days, and that was only if the conditions are right. But Jade and I kept checking the seeds each day for three weeks. And guess what? We didn't see ANYTHING! Not one little poke of green. Jade and I were starting to feel disappointed. "I guess we both failed, huh?" Jade said, looking over her mound of soil.

"I guess my dad was right. Seeds won't grow if it's too cold." I replied, looking down at mine.

Our first chance of growing pumpkins was a disaster. Or, as my dad calls it, a "learning experience." But I guess I did learn; seeds won't grow if it is too cold. "I suppose that's why some of the videos showed greenhouses for the pumpkins!" I said, remembering my research.

"Yeah! It is much warmer in greenhouses!" Jade replied. So Jade and I decided we needed to build a greenhouse.

# Chapter 5:

## Time to Plant the Pumpkins! Again...

The next weekend, Jade came over really early, and we were ready to build a huge **greenhouse**. We got out all of my dad's tools and started planning. Jade noticed my dad was working in his garden and said, "It must be the right time to plant our pumpkins now if your dad is going to plant his garden!"

We went looking for the materials needed to build our greenhouse and couldn't find anything. We needed a lot of lumber, metal pipes, and clear plastic. So, after looking, I asked Dad if we had any of these things.

He made one of those "dad thinking" looks and said, "No, I don't have anything on that list. What are you trying to build?" We walked him over to our pumpkin patch and showed him where we were going to build the greenhouse!

"We want to build a greenhouse right here! It would cover both of our pumpkin patches, keep the pumpkins warm, protecting them from animals eating the leaves, or strong winds doing any damage." I told

Dad in one breath. I was so excited and proud of this idea!

“Yea, Mr. Perez! We’re going to build an awesome greenhouse!” Jade exclaimed. Dad seemed impressed. I could tell by the way he was nodding and making an “mmm-hhh” noise the whole time we were talking.

“May I make a suggestion?” he asked. We both nodded; we were all ears for his ideas! He walked us back to his garden and picked up a milk jug with the bottom cut out of it. He said, “This is my greenhouse.”

“Mr. Perez, that makes no sense! You can’t even walk in it!” said Jade looking like my dad was saying something crazy, which I might agree, he was.

He continued, “What do you want your greenhouse to do for your plants?”

Jade answered, “Keep them warm, so the seeds start to grow.”

Dad continued, “Yes, and more importantly, this time of year, it will keep the soil warm too. I cut the bottom off the milk jug and then plant my seeds. Then, I put the milk jug over where I planted the seed. It acts like a mini greenhouse for that plant until it’s warm enough at night for the plant to survive.”

Jade seemed impressed by this idea, “It’s recycling!” she said. But I still liked the idea of a huge greenhouse.

Dad continued, “We can’t build a big greenhouse in the yard for several reasons. For one, pumpkins are typically grown in big fields with no greenhouses. So, they don’t need a greenhouse to grow. But I do think if you have something to warm the soil, you could try to plant some more seeds today.”

While a big greenhouse sounded exciting, my dad was right. I had been to a bunch of pumpkin patches before, and I had seen pumpkins out in a field but never in a greenhouse. And I think my dad had a point. If we can warm the soil, we could start the plants today, and planting today sounded pretty great too. Jade and I agreed we would

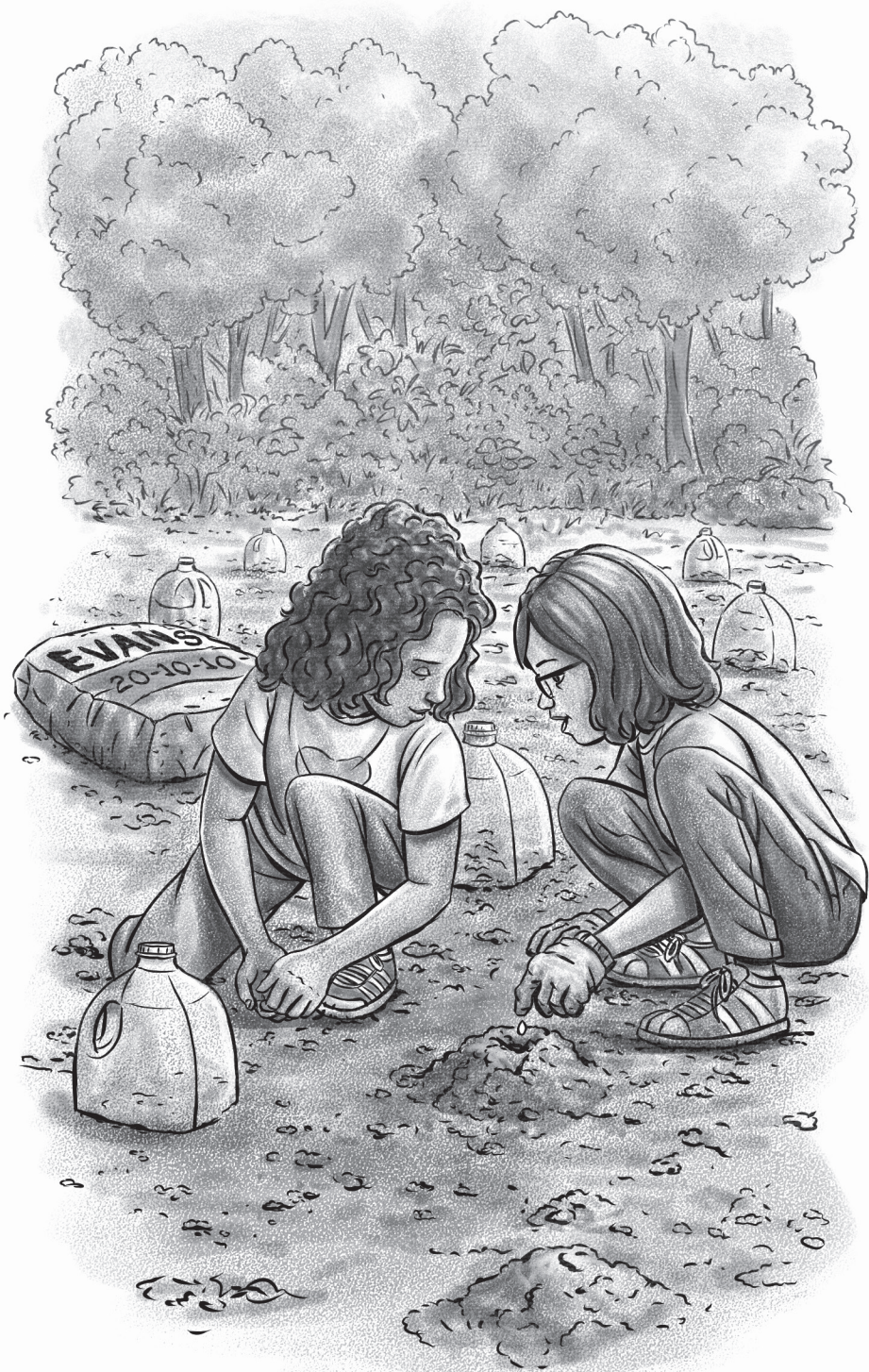
try the milk jug mini-greenhouses, so we rounded up a bunch of milk jugs, cut off the bottoms, and went to ask Dad for the seeds to plant again.

As we were walking back up to Dad, he hung up his phone and said, “Hey girls, that was Ms. Amy! Remember, when she visited and took samples of the soil?” We both nodded, and Dad continued, “She said the soil tests show you will want to add a little bit of nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus to grow prized pumpkins.”

“What are those things?” I asked.

Dad continued, “They are the food for your plants; like you need food to grow, so does a plant. Nitrogen is important for healthy green growth; phosphorus helps root health and flower development, and potassium also helps keep the roots healthy, allowing the plants to take in water.” Dad grabbed a bag and pointed to three numbers written on it and said, “Every fertilizer lists these three numbers as ratios of the nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium in the fertilizer. This bag has what you need for your pumpkins. Let’s add a small amount of this to your soil before you plant your seeds.” Go dig up the hills where you want to plant the seeds, and I’ll come to add the fertilizer.”

Jade and I took off and dug the hills. Dad added fertilizer and then gave us each ten more seeds from our seed packets. He said, “It’s still a bit early to plant pumpkins, but if you use the mini-greenhouses to keep the soil and seedlings warm, they may be ok. Also, each seed packet came with 25 seeds. If this doesn’t work, you each have ten left!” Before Dad could finish talking, we were off to plant our seeds and cover them with our mini-greenhouses.





# Chapter 6:

## Waiting and Waiting and Waiting...

Jade and I checked our pumpkins every day, removing the top cap from the milk jug to check for sprouts in the soil. Each time we took them off, we could feel the hot air in the jugs. The greenhouse idea was working! After seven long days, Jade saw a small plant coming out of the soil in one of her jugs. It was super cool! But I had nothing in any of mine. “Jade was going to have better pumpkins than me,” I thought. I couldn’t help but feel a little bit jealous of my friend.

After a few more days, I FINALLY got a sprout! I was so excited; I did a pumpkin patch dance. Jade was happy for me too! She danced with me. After that, we continued to check our mini-greenhouses every day. We were surprised that more new plants were coming out of the soil! It was so exciting to see them grow!

On the tenth day since planting the seeds, I had nine of my ten seeds growing into plants, and Jade had all ten of hers. I might have felt a little jealous again. I know I’m supposed to feel happy for my friend, but this was a competition, and she was doing better than me.

One day, we each took one of the milk jug greenhouses off a hill to inspect the plants more closely. Jade said, “Can you believe this small

plant could turn into a pumpkin that is 2,000 pounds? That's crazy! Thank goodness this isn't 2,000 pounds of broccoli."

"Hahaha! Yeah, it is," my dad's voice said from behind us. He continued, "Your plants are looking good! But don't forget to put your milk jug greenhouses back on. It's supposed to be cool tonight." And he walked away.

"You know I'm going to get you to try broccoli one of these days, Jade," I said, standing up, brushing the dirt off my hands.

"Yeah, right, just like you're going to beat me to the gate one of these days!" Then she grabbed her bike and took off. I grabbed mine, too; I would show her how fast I could go!

The next morning, I looked out at the pumpkin patch and saw the milk jugs sitting on the ground next to the plants. "Oh NO! We forgot to put them back on!" I thought. I ran out by the plants and saw the ones not covered were withered up. I put the jugs on and went back inside.

Jade came over later that day, and we went to check the pumpkins. "We forgot to put the jugs back on before we biked away," I told her. "But I put them back on this morning. Maybe they are ok?"

They didn't look ok. The ones we covered looked fine, but we didn't give up on the withered ones. We checked them every day, but the plants that got cold stopped growing. The good news is that the ones in the milk jug mini-greenhouses continued to grow! Thank goodness for those milk jugs!

# Chapter 7:

## Growing & Knowing

Over the past few weeks, my dad was putting more plants in his garden and removing some of the milk jug greenhouses he used. Jade and I were playing in the back yard when I heard Dad say, “Girls, you have ten more pumpkin seeds left to plant.” Oh, yes, I forgot we still had some left! He continued, “It’s warm enough now that you don’t need to make any mini-greenhouses. You can plant them right in the soil. Also, please recycle the milk jugs, since you no longer need them!” He handed us the seeds, and off we went to plant them. We knew better now to wait a week before checking if they were growing. And a week later, they were!

Dad told us to “make sure to water them well, and soon they will start to grow their first **vine**.”

Now the days were hot, the sun was out forever, and we were getting full into summer. Most days, we would check on the pumpkins and water them. They were starting to get HUGE leaves and grow lots of vines. Jade and I planted our pumpkins about twenty feet apart, and the vines were almost touching each other. Dad told us, “As the days get longer and hotter, your pumpkin vines could grow up to a foot a

day! With that amount of growth, you are going to need to water them a lot.” He was right! It didn’t take too long. Our vines were running into each other and starting to grow out into the yard! They were everywhere; it was getting hard to walk without stepping on them.

We spent at least an hour a day in our pumpkin patch. Jade and I learned a lot about growing pumpkins. For example, we didn’t know if you step on a vine, it will kill the vine, and there is no way to fix it! Or, if we didn’t water our plants enough, the big leaves would get droopy and look like they were dying. But, if you water them, the leaf will seem to come back to life. We figured those out on our own! But, one day, something was wrong that we couldn’t figure out. Some of the leaves had turned yellow.

Dad’s friend Ms. Amy came over to help investigate.

“Hmm, yeah, those are yellow leaves, alright. Let’s see if we can figure out why. Did you add some fertilizer to your soil?” She asked.

I told her, “Yup, we mixed the fertilizer into the soil when we planted the seeds.”

Then she asked, “Have you added any fertilizer since?” Jade and I both shook our head, NO.

Ms. Amy continued, “Your plants are running low on a specific nutrient called nitrogen. You’re going to want to give the plants a fertilizer with more nitrogen, or your plants will stop growing. Just like you, the plants need nutrients, or food, to grow!”

“They’re hungry!” Jade said.

“Right! And the way they show that is by turning a bit yellow.” Ms. Amy continued.

Dad helped us fertilize the plants with nitrogen. It was not easy because to add the fertilizer, we needed to work our way to the first hill where the seeds started growing. We had to be super careful not to step on any vines. It was like a maze! Thankfully, it WORKED! After a week, our leaves were looking a lot less hungry. They were losing the yellow color and turning green again.

# Chapter 8:

## Deer and Friendship

It turns out our plants weren't the only hungry things around. One day when Jade came over to check on the pumpkins, she started to yell.

"What did YOU DO?" Jade shouted. I rushed over to see why she was yelling. She looked so mad at me.

"What are you talking about, Jade?" I asked.

"Look at my leaves! They're all ripped up. How could you do this to my plants, Tori? I thought we were friends!" I looked over at her plants. They were in bad shape. They were ripped and shredded, and some were missing. It looked awful. I felt terrible.

"Oh no! I'm so sorry, Jade. But I didn't do this! It's true, I've felt a little jealous about your patch. Your leaves have been growing bigger than mine, but I thought that was because you had a different kind of pumpkin. I would never do anything at all to hurt your plants. I promise!"

But Jade didn't believe me. She said nothing, grabbed her bike,

and rode away. Feeling so sad, I ran inside to cry. The pumpkins were supposed to be a fun, friendly competition! I didn't want to lose my friend over it.

A few days passed, and Jade didn't come over, not even to water her plants. I was feeling so sad. I wanted my friend back. But how? She was still blaming me for hurting her plants. "I need to figure out what happened to her plants!" I thought to myself.

One evening at dusk, my dad shouted, "Tori, come here! Look at this!" He was looking out a window into the backyard. "The deer are eating the leaves of your pumpkins; I knew it!" He took a picture with his phone and said, "Show this to Jade! And see if she would want to help put up a fence tomorrow to keep the deer away from both of your pumpkins."

I called Jade, she answered the phone and still sounded mad. "Jade, I promise, I didn't hurt your plants, and I can prove it! My dad caught some deer eating our pumpkin leaves. It was the deer!"

"It was...deer?" Jade asked softly over the phone.

"Yes! Hungry deer!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Tori. I'm so sorry I blamed you for hurting my plants. I thought you just wanted to win the most prized pumpkin contest. Can you please forgive me?"

"Yes! I forgive you, Jade. And I'm sorry I was jealous of your plants. How about from now on we help each other out? No more competition? If either of us grows a pumpkin by the end of this, both will be prized pumpkins!"

"That's true! We haven't even seen a pumpkin growing yet. So that sounds wonderful!" Jade responded.

"Great, well, the first thing we can do is work together to build a fence to keep the deer out."

It felt great to have my friend back again.

# Chapter 9:

## Flowers and Bees

When putting up the fence, Jade noticed some orange-yellow flowers on the vines. We hadn't seen these before and knew the flowers needed to bloom before we could grow any pumpkins. We stopped building the fence and worked through the vines to see a flower up close. Dad noticed and said, "This is exciting! Now, to make sure the flowers get pollinated, I'll talk to Mr. Kim, who is a **beekeeper**. He'll bring over a small hive of bees to pollinate the flowers! I will give him a call and tell him the flowers are out!"

Later that afternoon, Mr. Kim came over with a small wooden box. He was wearing a white suit that had a hood with a screen on the front of it. He carried the box back to the pumpkin patch and looked at the flowers and said, "Oh, this will be good for the bees and the flowers!"

I asked, "Are there bees in that box?"

Mr. Kim responded, "Oh yes, about 10,000 of them, and they will pollinate your flowers in no time! It's a nucleus colony. I just started it with a new queen, so it's not as big as my other colonies."





I needed to move these bees, with the new queen, to a new location, helping the colony accept their new queen. So, it worked out great.” He continued, “The bees won’t bother you once they settle into their new home, but I am wearing my suit while I open the colony. Maybe don’t work in the pumpkin patch this evening, as the bees orient themselves, and then you will be good to go! I will leave the bees here for about four weeks, and then I will pick them up and move them into a large colony to build up their hive for the rest of the summer.” Mr. Kim opened the colony and then took off. We stayed away for the rest of the day.

A week after Mr. Kim visited, we noticed some of the flowers starting to die, and what looked like little round balls beginning to form where the flowers were. They were BABY PUMPKINS! And a lot of them! Jade and I started counting them but lost track because there were so many on all the vines.

# Chapter 10:

## Growing the Best Pumpkins!

That night, Jade slept over, and we watched more videos on growing pumpkins. There were so many videos and so many different ways to grow the best pumpkins. Many of the videos said to take or pinch off some of the baby pumpkins. They explained that this would help the ones you keep become bigger and better. Every video we watched on growing giant pumpkins said we needed to do this. Jade was really into growing the absolute biggest pumpkin, which meant she could only have one pumpkin growing per plant!

Jade said, “Tomorrow, I’m going to pick the biggest pumpkin on each vine, and then remove the rest, so the one can get all the nutrients and grow the biggest!” I didn’t want to do that. Besides, my pumpkins were going to be normal size and look warty and weird.

I told Jade, “I’m going to leave all of mine because I’m not trying to grow them big, but I can help you pinch off the ones you don’t want to grow.”

Jade said, “Absolutely.” And we headed to bed. The next morning, we went out to the patch and picked off all the baby pumpkins Jade didn’t want.

# Chapter 11:

## Harvest Festival

The next month and a half, Jade and I watched our pumpkins grow! Jade's were getting huge, and I was getting a lot of them. We watered them and added fertilizer when we noticed the leaves changing color. Mr. Kim came and got his bees. Ms. Amy stopped by a few times, too, and checked in on the project.

As summer neared an end, and the pumpkins were getting to full size, Dad suggested we pick a date to harvest. Jade and I agreed we would pick pumpkins on October 1, but we didn't know what to do with all the pumpkins. Jade had 10 HUGE pumpkins, and I probably had 100 weird, warty pumpkins. They were SOOO WEIRD! Dad overheard us talking about what to do with the pumpkins and said, "Why don't we have a harvest festival? We will invite some friends over, and you can tell them about your pumpkin growing experience, and then they can pick pumpkins to take home." Jade and I loved the idea.

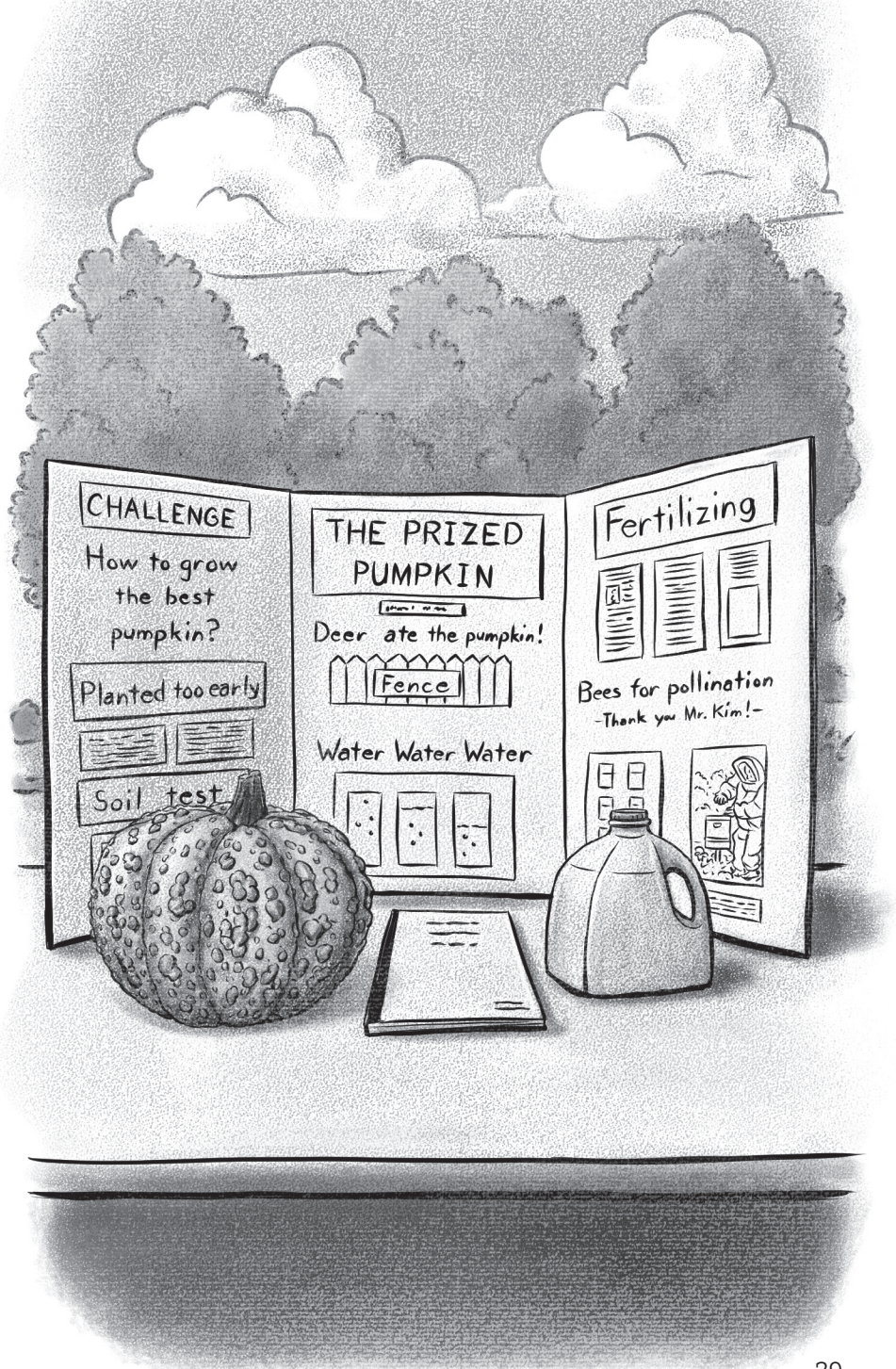
We decided we would make a presentation to talk about everything we learned and share that with our friends! We had so much fun making the presentation and sharing it at the harvest festival. It was titled "The Prized Pumpkins." We talked about all the things we

learned. Things like: planting too early, and killing the pumpkins, and how we wanted to make a big greenhouse, but made mini milk jug greenhouses to warm the soil. We talked about how Ms. Amy, the agronomist, helped us figure out how to feed the pumpkins and how we stepped on vines and killed them. Then about Mr. Kim, the beekeeper, and how many pumpkins Jade originally had and why we took some off. I bet we talked for an hour, but people kept asking questions, so we didn't realize it was that long. I guess we just got excited to share our story. Growing pumpkins wasn't as easy as I thought it would be, but it was worth it!

After the presentation, we all walked out to the patch. "These are some pretty prized pumpkins," I said to my friend, looking out over our patch.

"And you are my prized friend!" Jade said back, giving me a high five. "We make a great team!"

Jade and I pointed out our pumpkins and invited all our guests to pick their prized pumpkin to take home!



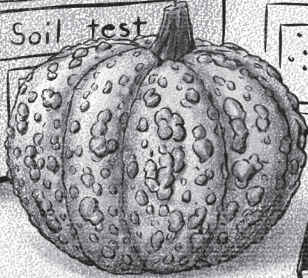
### CHALLENGE

How to grow the best pumpkin?

Planted too early

[Diagram]

Soil test

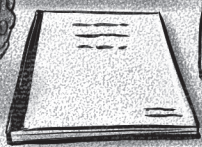
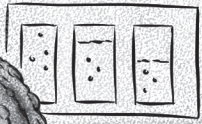


### THE PRIZED PUMPKIN

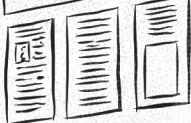
Deer ate the pumpkin!



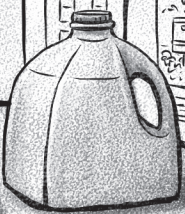
Water Water Water



### Fertilizing



Bees for pollination  
-Thank you Mr. Kim!-





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# The Prized Pumpkin

by Rick Henningfeld

Tori and Jade are best friends until a friendly competition to grow the most prized pumpkin nearly tears their friendship apart! Come along as they create plans, work with an agronomist and beekeeper, learn from their mistakes and successes all in an effort to grow weird, warty, and ginormous pumpkins. The summer of the prized pumpkin competition will be one Tori and Jade will never forget!

