



Mason County

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Thinking of Growing Pumpkins?

By Cyndie Willey

Washington's cool weather is great for pumpkins. Ideally, pumpkins do well in 55-to-60-degree temperatures. Whether you are picking pumpkins from your own back yard, buying them from your local farmer or Master Gardeners, they are bound to be a big hit.

When deciding on a type of pumpkin to grow, consider its purpose; for pie, think New England Sugar Pie, for carving the Jack-O-Lantern is best and for ornamental decorations grow the Cinderella. No matter which variety you choose, you will need space and time. The vines can reach up to 30 feet in length. Most varieties can be trained on a trellis to save space, taking weight into consideration. Most pumpkins need 90 to 120 days to mature. WSU Mason County Master Gardeners planted seeds in June at our Catalyst Demonstration Garden and recently harvested forty pumpkins.

The Big Max pumpkin is great for desserts, requires 120 days to reach its full 70 inches and 100 pounds. Whereas the smaller Pumpkin Munchkin make great bowls for filling, with only 100 days to reach its maturity of 4-8 ounces and 3-4 inches wide.

Orange (Howden) is still the most popular color for ornamental pumpkins. White (Moonshine) sets the mood for fall activities and the beautiful blue pumpkins (Queensland Blue) have become interior centerpieces for winter. Pumpkins are part of the Cucurbitaceae, gourd family, generally belonging to the Cucurbita pepo, C. maxima, and C. moschata species. Most people are surprised to learn that a pumpkin is classified as a fruit.

If you have decided to grow pumpkins next summer, this is the time to save the seeds from the ones you liked the most. Be selective when saving seeds and look for pumpkins with qualities you desire. If you are purchasing seeds winter is the best time to buy. Local adapted seeds can give you great results since the seeds are acclimated to this growing climate. I recommend purchasing seeds in January to increase your chances of getting your favorites before they run out. Washington State University Extension is a good resource for seed buying information.

"Sugar Pie", "Casper", "Jack O' Lantern" and "Cinderella" pumpkins, along with "Beetlejuice" gourds will be available at our "donation" based Pumpkin Sale on October 23 from 10 am -12 pm at Catalyst Park Garden. We are thinking about growing the Queensland Blue pumpkins next year!

Visit www.mgfmc.org for more information and our Facebook page to see upcoming events: Decorating Gourds and Mason Bees. You can also contact our plant clinic for answers to your gardening questions.

Cyndie Willey has been a Master Gardener for 4 years. She has been involved with education and garden program activities. She lives on Harstine Island and has planted, maintained, and harvested over 9,000 square feet of garden area.

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