

How About Halloween After Labor Day?;
Pumpkin Storage and Harvesting

With pumpkin fruit in many fields starting to turn orange and Halloween still many weeks away, the suggestion has been made to move Halloween up several weeks. The good news for some growers is that pumpkin demand seems to be earlier than in previous years. In many places, the fall festival decorating season kicks in right after Labor Day. Here are some pointers on curing, handling and storing pumpkins and winter squash.

Harvest fruit as soon as they are mature and prior to frost. Both squashes and pumpkins should be well matured before harvest and storage. In some years when maturity is late, pumpkin fruit with at least 40-50% of the fruit surface with orange color will continue to ripen. Use care in handling fruits to avoid wounds. Cuts and bruises in the rind are open to decay organisms that may cause a great deal of loss in the short run. Under proper conditions wound areas can heal over by producing cork tissue. The protective tissue seems to develop best at relatively high temperature and in moist atmosphere.

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- > Harvest fruits when mature avoiding cuts and bruises.
 - > Cure after harvest 80-85 degrees F and 5-80% humidity for about 10-20 days.
 - > After curing, store at 50-60 degrees and 70% humidity.
 - > Keep fruit dry and provide good air circulation.
 - > Temperatures below 40 degrees for long periods cause chilling injury and lead to fruit rots.
 - > Pumpkins will keep for 2-3 months
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A 10 to 20 day curing period at 80 to 85 degrees and about 80% humidity before storage is often recommended for pumpkins and winter squashes. For pumpkins, many times this can be done in the field, in wind rows, in order to avoid excess handling and costs.

At the end of the curing period, the humidity should be lowered to about 70 percent and the temperature kept between 50 to 60 degrees F. It is essential to keep the surface dry during the storage period. Any dry place where as close as possible to the desired storage temperatures can be maintained is suitable for storage of pumpkins and squashes. They keep best when not piled on top of each other but this is not practical for most operations. Try to keep stacks at minimum heights leaving room for good air circulation. Pumpkins will not keep so well as the hard winter squashes but pumpkins in good condition can be held 2 to 3 months without problems.

Crop Reports

Brad Bergefurd, Thom Harker, and Bill Evans

NorthCentral

The heaviest rains missed Celeryville this week. Moisture is adequate to wet but crop quality continues to improve. European corn borers are being caught every day in the branch's pheromone traps. Just a few corn earworm moths have been caught. Aphids are abundant on unsprayed radishes at the branch. Leafhopper numbers on lettuces remain high. A virus-like disease has been seen in endive and escarole. This may be a mosaic or yellows. Dr. Sally Miller's lab is studying it.

SouthWest

On average the areas received 1+ inches of some badly needed rains last weekend and early this week. One grower in southern Highland county reported 2.75 inches. These rains were very nice and gentle and were welcomed by growers. Area harvest of tomatoes, peppers, melons, watermelons, summer squash, cabbage, sweet corn, beans, etc. continues. It looks as if there may be a gap approaching in the sweet corn harvest within the next 10 to 14 days. Corn Borer and Earworm pressure has been somewhat minimal, however growers continue to follow weekly insecticide programs. Growers are applying fungicides on a regular basis to melon, squash and pumpkin plantings for Powdery Mildew. A couple growers are reporting fields of "ORANGE PUMPKINS" that are or near ready for harvest. These growers also report that their vines are beginning to "collapse" as they near harvest. In other fields, later plantings, pumpkins are just beginning to set fruit with some plantings the size of soft balls. Overall fruit set so far looks good for the areas pumpkin crop, with several buyers calling me this week to check on the crop status..

TOMCAST Report

Disease Severity Value (DSV) Hotline -1-800-228-2905

Jim Jasinski

What's New At The VegNet Web Site

In The Pumpkin Patch, JULY 1998, My Pumpkins Are Bigger Than Yours Returns,
See: Bacterial Wilt, Angular Leaf Spot and Crop Status.

Visit: "The Problem of The Week" For Pictures of...

Septoria Leaf Blight and Phytophthora Blight of Tomato.

Angular Leaf Spot, Buckeye Rot and Phytophthora Blight of Cucurbits.

Timber Rot and Hail Damage.

The Meigs /Washington Vegetable Tour from SE Ohio, (Sweet corn, tomatoes + peppers)

Check Out the New Look of the Tomcast Section (requires your browser to be able to view frames.)

+ A New Tomato Research Report by C. A. Wyenandt, R. M. Riedel, M. Bennett and C. Welty.

From The Vegetable Crops Planner: Links now provided to the National Weather Service Offices in Cleveland and Wilmington, OH. Provides Agricultural Observations, soil temperatures, climate summaries, growing degree days and much more.

1998 Ohio Vegetable Production Guide - Online. Visit: "The Library

Return to Vegetable Crops Homepage Ohio State University Extension

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