

Gaston Grower Spotlight- October 2020



October is the month for thinking about picking out the perfect decorative pumpkin. Some families may even be interested in utilizing pumpkins in the kitchen for fall treats. North Carolina ranked 4th in pumpkin production in 2018 so while not a big cash crop it is a crop that has proved to be valuable to many of North Carolina's growers looking for new sources of income. Jack-o'-lantern varieties (*Cucurbita pepo*) can come in many different shapes and sizes. Pumpkins utilized for food are usually referred to as "pie pumpkins" or "sweet pumpkins", they are usually smaller, sweeter, and less fibrous than the traditional decorative pumpkins. Pumpkins in our area are planted from seed in late May-July (depending on variety) to ensure an October harvest. Examining results from the testing of cultivar performance **in the mountains** and the **eastern part of the state** may give some indication of how varieties may perform in our area.



Pumpkin Land

Pumpkins have become a staple for many fall agritourism destinations across the state. Gaston County is no exception, Lineberger's Maple Spring Farm utilizes the crop to bring folks in after berry picking and peach picking are through. Pumpkins pair well with hay rides for the family and other kid friendly activities at local spots like Lineberger's. Here is a link to their Facebook page for more details on their operation.



Tips for your Pumpkin Pick

When picking a Jack-o'-lantern pumpkin make sure you choose a hard pumpkin with no soft spots or blemishes. A heavier pumpkin and one with a strong healthy stem are indications of a healthy pumpkin. Wash your pumpkin and your carving tools with warm water and allow it to dry. Thoroughly clean the interior of your pumpkin after cutting its top off. Soaking or spraying your pumpkin initially with bleach water will help to preserve it as well. Feel free to spray the pumpkin with a bleach water solution daily throughout the lifespan of the Jack-o'-lantern for continued protection from decay via microorganisms. Lastly, use an artificial lighting source rather than a flame that produces heat which can shorten the pumpkins lifespan.



N.C. A&T
STATE UNIVERSITY

NC STATE
UNIVERSITY

N.C. Cooperative Extension prohibits discrimination and harassment regardless of age, color, disability, family and marital status, gender identity, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation and veteran status. NC State University, N.C. A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and local governments cooperating.

